760 Players profiled **38** Champions League teams...in detail **18** Euro leagues previewed

132 PAGES

World Soccer®

GLOBAL FOOTBALL SINCE 1960

The ultimate guide to the new season in Europe

KICK OFF!

AUGUST 2011 £3.90
09 >
6 42633 92219 1
Australia $10.00 USA $8.99
Printed in the UK EXPORT
www.worldsoccer.com

gambleaware.co.uk
FOR THE FACTS ABOUT GAMBLING

NEW MOBILE SITE

FASTER, BETTER, SMARTER.

VISIT WILLIAMHILL.COM OR TEXT 'HOME' TO 61718

William HILL
THE HOME OF BETTING

Images used for illustration purposes only. William Hill rules apply. Over 18s only.

WorldSoccer

Global football intelligence since 1960

August 2011

Contents

NEW SEASON GUIDE P45-107

46 **Austria**
47 **Belgium**
Genk, Standard Liege
50 **Czech Republic**
51 **Denmark**
Copenhagen, Odense
54 **England**
Arsenal, Chelsea, Manchester City, Manchester United
60 **France**
Lille, Lyon, Marseille
65 **Germany**
Bayern Munich, Bayer Leverkusen, Borussia Dortmund
70 **Greece**
Olympiakos, Panathinaikos
73 **Holland**
Ajax, Twente
76 **Italy**
Internazionale, Milan, Napoli, Udinese
82 **Poland**
83 **Portugal**
Benfica, Porto
86 **Romania**
Otelul, Vaslui
89 **Russia**
CSKA Moscow, Rubin Kazan, Zenit
92 **Scotland**
Rangers
94 **Serbia**
95 **Spain**
Barcelona, Real Madrid, Valencia, Villarreal
101 **Switzerland**
Basle, Zurich
105 **Ukraine**
Dynamo Kiev, Shakhtar Donetsk

Dispatches

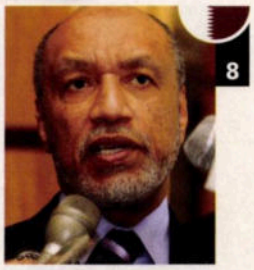
Exclusive reports from our worldwide network of correspondents

36 **Turkey** Fenerbahce's president is arrested
38 **Afghanistan** the world's most improved team
40 **Italy** Calciopoli rears its ugly head once more
41 **Isle of Wight** hosts win the Island Games
42 **Poland/Ukraine** Euro 2012 latest update

THE WORLD THIS MONTH

People in the news...on and off the pitch

4 **In pictures**
8 **From the editor**
8 **Bin Hammam** Qatari to fight life ban
10 **Finland** prison sentence for match fixer
13 **Paul Gardner** why MLS must stop the friendlies
16 **Brian Glanville** Blatter's strange bedfellows



COPA REVIEW

20 **Uruguay rule South America**
Diego Forlan and Luis Suarez led *La Celeste* to a record 15th Copa America title

SPECIAL REPORT

28 **Twenty years of the Premier League**
The league that changed world football

INSIDER

108 **Twelve months on**
Keir Radnedge on FIFA's year since South Africa

THE GREAT TEAMS

130 **Ajax 1973**

World Service

The ultimate global news and results section

116 Internationals
120 Digest
123 Club Results
128 Squads

SAVE MONEY ON WorldSoccer

Exclusive subscription offer. See page 26.

In Pictures

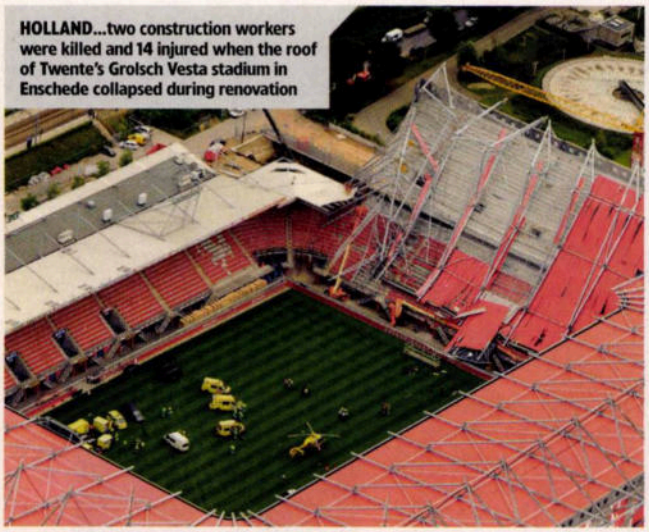
The global game caught on camera

CHILE...cars queue up at the Paso Los Libertadores pass as Chile fans wait to cross the border into Argentina for the Copa America

BELARUS...Olcan Adin (right) of Turkey's Gaziantepspor takes a tumble under a challenge from Minsk's Aleksandr Sachyuka in the Europa League

EGYPT...an Al Ahly fan climbs onto a loud speaker to rally the club's supporters during the Cairo derby against Zamalek

SOUTH SUDAN...a day after South Sudan was declared independent from the north following decades of civil war, a fan – dressed in the republic's flag – watches their first game against a Kenyan club side



HOLLAND...two construction workers were killed and 14 injured when the roof of Twente's Grolsch Vesta stadium in Enschede collapsed during renovation

USA...Chicago Fire fans live up to their club's name as they light flares during the match against Portland Timbers

BANGLADESH...driving rain in Dhaka could not stop Bangladesh recording a 3-0 World Cup win over Pakistan

FROM THE EDITOR

The kick-off of a new European season is traditionally a time for optimism. But it's hard to feel optimistic about many of the problems facing the game. This month, we report on another match-fixing scandal – in Turkey – and update you on others. As this edition of *World Soccer* was going to press, Mohamed Bin Hammam, Sepp Blatter's sole challenger in the recent FIFA predential election, was banned for life from football, but we have certainly not heard the last from him, his country Qatar or stories about corruption within FIFA.

There's a new look to our start of season preview issue. We've combined our league previews with the Champions League teams guide. We've featured all the clubs that qualify directly for the third qualifying round of the Champions League onwards, the exception being Turkey, where it was unclear at the time of going to press whether Fenerbahce and Trabzonspor would suffer any repurcussions as a result of the unfolding scandal.

> We have not heard the last from Mohamed Bin Hammam, Qatar or stories about corruption within FIFA

We'll preview the Turkish league next month, and report from Rio de Janeiro on the 2014 World Cup draw, where more fallout is expected from the ongoing FIFA crisis.

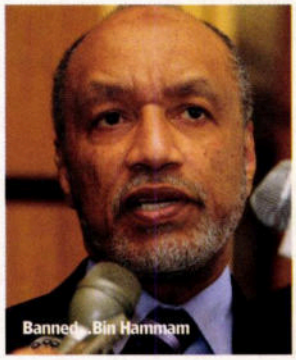
Gavin Hamilton, Editor

10 SIGNIFICANT EVENTS THIS MONTH

1. Uruguay win the Copa America for a record 15th time ➤ Page 20
2. Hosts Argentina and holders Brazil crash out of the Copa in the quarter-finals ➤ Page 22
3. Mexico win world Under-17s on home soil ➤ Page 120
4. Japan win Women's World Cup for the first time ➤ Page 122
5. FIFA ExCo member Mohamed Bin Hammam is banned for life ➤ Page 8
6. Barcelona complete the signing of Alexis Sanchez and edge closer to getting Cesc Fabregas ➤ Page 97
7. Manchester United were the big spenders in the first month of the transfer window ➤ Page 54
8. Turkey was gripped by its biggest ever match-fixing scandal ➤ Page 36
9. Italy's Calciopoli scandal of 2006 could return ➤ Page 40
10. The European league season kicks off ➤ Page 45

■ QATAR

Bin Hammam vows to fight FIFA lifetime ban


Banned: Bin Hammam

Mohamed Bin Hammam branded Sepp Blatter a dictator and vowed to fight his life ban from football after being found guilty on charges of bribery by FIFA's ethics committee.

Bin Hammam was accused of offering bribes to members of the Caribbean Football Union in May during his campaign to unseat FIFA president Blatter.

"This is only the battle, not the war," said Bin Hammam, who did not travel to Zurich to defend himself. He said he would appeal and, if necessary, take his case to the Committee for Arbitration in Sport and the Swiss courts.

Bin Hammam, president of the Asian Football Confederation, is the most senior FIFA official to be banned from the organisation. He withdrew his candidacy for the FIFA presidency in May shortly after the bribery allegations surfaced. Blatter was re-elected unopposed a few days later.

Bin Hammam was accused of offering cash "gifts" of $40,000 each to members of the Caribbean Football Union following a meeting with the Bin Hammam campaign at the Hyatt Regency hotel in Trinidad on May 10. The meeting had been set up by former CONCACAF president Jack Warner.

The case against Warner was dropped in June after he resigned all his football positions.

The ethics committee based its decision to ban Bin Hammam on a report compiled by ex-FBI chief Louis Freeh. Freeh's report said: "Through his legal counsel, Mr Bin Hammam refused to speak with investigative counsel working for the FIFA ethics committee. Also through his legal counsel, Mr Bin Hammam provided some documents, but refused to provide his banking records for review."

The report added: "Several witnesses advised that Mr Warner stated that the cash had originated with Mr Bin Hammam and the cash was given to them at Mr Warner's suggestion, instead of a more formal gift.

"There is no direct evidence linking Mr Bin Hammam to the offer or payment of money to the attendees of the Trinidad & Tobago meeting.

"However, there is compelling circumstantial evidence to suggest that the money did originate with Bin Hammam and was distributed by Mr Warner's subordinates as a means of demonstrating Mr Warner's largesse.

Bin Hammam reacted angrily to FIFA's decision. "I reject the findings and maintain my innocence and will continue to fight through the legal routes available to me," he said.

He later claimed: "This is actually the act of the dictators... You have witnessed through history the dictators, when they think this or that person is a prominent one to replace him, first thing they do they execute him and try to fabricate any allegation against him to jail him or something like that."

"Uruguay knew what they were trying to do on the pitch. Us? I'm not sure"

Former Argentina centre-back Roberto Ayala takes aim in the wake of his country's quarter-final loss to Uruguay at the Copa America

■ SWITZERLAND

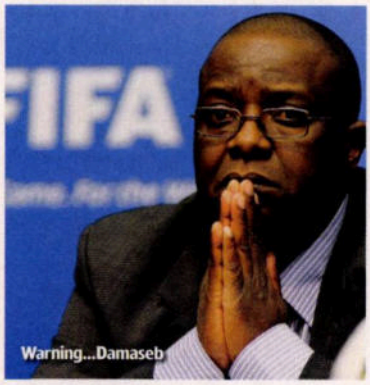
Messi heads UEFA award shortlist

Lionel Messi, Xavi and Cristiano Ronaldo are on a three man-shortlist for a new UEFA award, the Best Player in Europe, which will be awarded to the outstanding individual of the 2010-11 season

The winner will be announced in Monaco on August 25. The award will be based upon the votes of 53 journalists, one in each of UEFA's member countries. *World Soccer* Editor Gavin Hamilton will be the English journalist on the panel.

■ SWITZERLAND

Damaseb hints at further action in bribery case



Warning...Damaseb

Petrus Damaseb, the acting chair of FIFA's ethics committee who led the investigation into Mohamed Bin Hammam, hinted that further action could be taken against others involved in the bribery case which led to Bin Hammam's lifetime ban from football.

"The evidence laid before us shows there are other people that need to explain certain things that took place that must be further investigated," said Damaseb.

The other FIFA ExCo members who travelled to Trinidad for Bin Hammam's meeting with the Caribbean Football Union were Worawi Makudi of Thailand, Manuel Fernando (Sri Lanka) and Hany Abou Rida (Egypt).

HEROES & VILLAINS

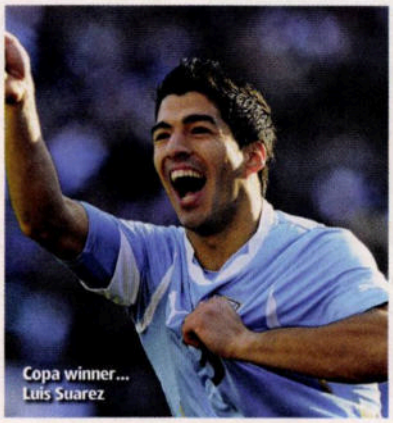
World champions... Japan's women

JAPAN'S WOMEN

Beat favourites USA to win the Women's World Cup for the first time following tragic times in their homeland.

KIM GI-DONG

Pohang Steelers' 39-year-old midfielder became the oldest-ever scorer in the K-League with his goal in the 7-0 victory over Daejeon.



Copa winner... Luis Suarez

LUIS SUAREZ

The Uruguay striker was the outstanding player at the 2011 Copa America in Argentina.

Positive drugs tests... North Korea's women

NORTH KOREA FIVE

Five members of North Korea's Women's World Cup squad failed dope tests at the tournament. Team officials blamed musk deer gland medicine used by traditional Chinese medicine to treat the effects of lightning strikes.

MEXICO EIGHT

Following the positive drugs tests at the Gold Cup, a further eight members of Mexico's squad were sent home from the national team pre-Copa America training camp after bringing prostitutes back to their hotel.

RENE SCHNITZLER

The former St Pauli forward was banned for 30 months in Germany for his part in fixing five second division matches in 2008.

BRAZIL

The defending champions crashed out of the Copa America, missing four spot-kicks in a penalty shoot-out defeat to Paraguay.

Down and out... Brazil

"They are ill – in a business, sporting and every other sense imaginable"

Ex-River Plate striker Mario Kempes surveys the wreckage of the famous old Buenos Aires club's relegation from the Argentinian top flight

GOALS we'd like to see again

To see clips of these goals, visit **www.worldsoccer.com**

1 GIOVANI DOS SANTOS
(Mexico v USA)
Shows great close control to dribble away from the USA goalkeeper before chipping home past five players.

2 RONALDINHO
(Flamengo v Atletico Mineiro)
Vintage Ronaldinho as he volleys into the far top corner from the edge of the penalty area.

3 DARLINGTON NAGBE
(Portland Timbers v Sporting Kansas City)
Intricate close control before volleying into the far top corner.

4 REGILIO SEEDORF
(Tauras Taurage v Den Haag)
Precise passing throughout the team before Seedorf's dribble and chip completes the move.

5 CRISTIANO RONALDO
(Real Madrid v LA Galaxy)
Three step-overs en route to a thunderous left-foot shot.

6 DAVID BECKHAM
(LA Galaxy v Chicago Fire)
Curls the ball in directly from a corner.

■ FINLAND

Match-fixing mastermind jailed for two years

Raj Perumal, the Singaporean behind a string of alleged fixed matches in Europe and the Far East, has been jailed for two years for his part in rigging games in the Finnish league.

Perumal was found guilty along with nine ex-RoPS players – seven Zambians and two Georgians – who received suspended sentences and were fined a total of more than €200,000.

"Their activities were widespread and the betting profit made from a single successful fix was, after expenses, normally between €0.5million and €1.5m," the court said.

As reported in last month's *World Soccer*, Perumal was a part of a group of Asian and eastern European match-fixers who sought to manipulate outcomes around the world.

According to the verdict, the criminal group attempted to fix 26 matches between 2008 and 2011, successfully manipulating the outcome in 11. Perumal's reward for successfully manipulating a match was reported to be €50,000. Players accepted bribes ranging from €500 to €40,000.

WINNERS

URUGUAY
Won the Copa America title for a record-breaking 15th time, with Luiz Suarez and Diego Forlan in sparkling form in Argentina.

MEXICO
Won their second world Under-17 title in front of an adoring home crowd at Mexico City's Azteca stadium.

AL AHLY
Clinched the Egyptian Premier League title for a seventh successive season. The Cairo giants have now won the championship 36 times – six of them under Portuguese coach Manuel Jose.

LOSERS

ENGLAND'S WOMEN
Took a leaf out of their male counterpart's book and were knocked out of the World Cup by France ...on penalties.

GABON
The co-hosts of next year's African Nations Cup finals had to suspend their domestic league due to financial difficulties.

THEYAB AWANA
Subbed after his backheel penalty for UAE against Lebanon was deemed to show a lack of respect.

UKSOCCERSHOP

NUMBER ONE FOR FOOTBALL SHIRTS

2011-12 Barcelona Shirts
Available from £39.99

Over 2000 products available online

www.uksoccershop.com

01698 423933

11-12 LA GALAXY HOME
£69.99

11-12 BARCELONA LITTLE BOYS MESSI
£54.99

11-12 CATALUNYA HOME
£49.99

11-12 SCHALKE AWAY RAUL 7
£69.99

11-12 MEXICO HOME CHICHARITO
£59.99

11-12 LAZIO AWAY
£44.99

11-12 ARSENAL HOME V. PERSIE 10
£54.99

1974 HOLLAND RETRO SHIRT
£39.99

1970 BRAZIL RETRO SHIRT
£39.99

1982 ITALY RETRO SHIRT
£39.99

10-11 REAL MADRID HOME (KIDS)
WAS £39.99
NOW £24.99

11-12 REAL MADRID HOME + RONALDO 7
£54.99

11-12 AC MILAN HOME + PATO 7
£54.99

info@uksoccershop.com www.uksoccershop.com

"No matter how many saves you make, we'll never accept you in our shirt"

A group of Bayern Munich fans hold up a less-than-welcoming banner for new goalkeeper Manuel Neuer at a pre-season friendly

REPORTS we couldn't make up

1 Beaten by Uruguay in the Copa America semi-finals, a Peru team went one better when the inmates of the Castro-Castro jail, near Lima, triumphed in the "Fulbito Penitentiary Copa America", a six-a-side competition played every four years to coincide with the main tournament. Around 250 inmates, mostly Peruvian, dressed in the national kits of the 12 participating countries for an opening ceremony before the real football began. The prisoners were then divided up into the respective 12 nations and played the month-long tournament. The Peru jail authorities believe that the tournament helps prisoners adjust to life outside after their release.

Peru beat Ecuador in the prison Final.

2 Switzerland midfielder Gokhan Inler surprised press and public alike when he was unveiled at his new club Napoli...wearing a lion's mask.

At a club press conference, Napoli president Aurelio De Laurentiis had invited a man dressed in a Napoli shirt and wearing a lion face mask onto the stage.

Inler, who was signed from Udinese, then proceeded to remove his mask, to the surprise of everybody.

■ USA

Whistle-blower Blazer facing questions over "commissions"

Questions... Blazer

Chuck Blazer, the CONCACAF general-secretary who reported Jack Warner and Mohamed Bin Hammam to FIFA is facing fresh controversy after it emerged he has been paid almost $10million in commissions for CONCACAF marketing deals in the past five years.

According to CONCACAF accounts, Blazer's company Sportvertising was paid 10 per cent of "all sponsorships and TV rights fees from all sources received by CONCACAF".

Blazer is CONCACAF chief executive and treasurer, and he is responsible for signing and presenting the accounts to the confederation's annual conference.

■ OBITUARIES

LEO KIRCH 1926-2011

Leo Kirch, the German media magnate who has died aged 85, was briefly one of the most powerful men in world football. A secretive man, he was compared with Rupert Murdoch and Silvio Berlusconi but without, ultimately, the same enduring Midas touch.

Kirch took advantage of FIFA's financial chaos after the collapse of ISL to provide instant refunding by purchasing the TV rights to the 2002 and 2006 World Cups. The venture proved far more complex than he had expected: he was infuriated at being thwarted in the British TV market by the "crown jewels" restrictions.

An over-priced purchase of Bundesliga rights was a further contributory factor to bankruptcy in 2002. FIFA took its World Cup TV rights back and, learning the lessons, brought all the commercial operations in-house.

Keir Radnedge

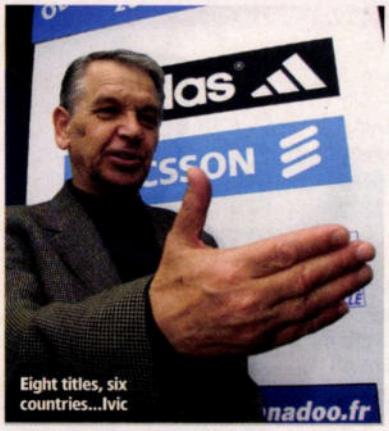
Media man...Kirch

Dr. Kirch

"He's a typical Barcelona player"

Ajax coach Frank De Boer pays the ultimate compliment to his Danish midfielder Christian Eriksen

■ OBITUARIES



Eight titles, six countries...Ivic

TOMISLAV IVIC 1933-2011

Tomislav Ivic, the Croat coach who died at 77, was a super-obsessive in a world of football obsessives. "I think about football all the time," he would tell anyone who managed the rare achievement of breaking through his practical focus.

Ivic was one of the first coaching devotees of pressing, and his most successful teams were marked by a commitment and energy that often brought trophies where more imaginative sides fell short. Some 14 trophies from a coaching career in 14 countries was a far grander CV than that of many coaches with a greater talent for self-promotion.

Ivic let his achievements speak for themselves. A mediocre inside-forward who later became coach with home-town NK Split, he joined neighbours Hajduk and, between 1973 and 1976, led them to two Yugoslav league titles and four Cup wins.

Success followed success, but Ivic never stayed long in any one place. He won league titles with Ajax, Anderlecht, Panathinaikos and then, in 1987, led newly crowned European champions Porto to instant glory in the European Super Cup, World Club Cup and Portuguese league and Cup double, before venturing into Asia to take up lucrative contracts in Dubai and then Iran.

Eight league titles in six different countries – plus appointments with four different national teams – was the headline prize list before back and heart problems plus diabetes took Ivic out of the front line.

Last autumn, in a rare interview, he said: "I'm happy with what I achieved, though I know there were many coaches far better than me. But I never pretended I was better than anyone else either. I was like thousands of other coaches. It was all about football; nothing else ever mattered."

Keir Radnedge

Paul GARDNER

THE WORLDWIDE VIEW

American soccer is making an exhibition of itself

The USA's Major League Soccer is a northern hemisphere league that plays its season during the summer. And, of course, there are problems.

Last year, MLS - which has to work hard to get the media's attention - faced a month of almost daily competition from televised World Cup games. This summer, the televised competition to MLS has been non-stop, with the CONCACAF Gold Cup, the Under-17 World Cup, the Copa America, the Under-20 World Cup, and the Women's World Cup.

More than enough, one would think. Yet there is even more competition in the form of a 15-game tournament in which – incredibly - MLS teams participate: the World Football Challenge, which this year (it was also staged in 2009) featured 14 foreign teams – including Manchester United, Real Madrid, Juventus and Barcelona – and six MLS teams.

Fifteen games were played in huge stadiums throughout the USA, with appropriately huge ticket prices, ranging from $32 up to over $1,000. And even that does not end this ludicrous assault on the MLS season, with other touring teams (mostly English, including West Bromwich Albion, Everton, Newcastle United and Bolton Wanderers) playing exhibition games against MLS teams.

> It is difficult to view the WFC as anything other than a blatant money-making venture. And if it makes the MLS teams look shoddy that's just too bad

Try as one might, it is difficult to view the WFC as anything other than a blatant money-making venture. And if Real Madrid and Manchester United make the MLS teams look shoddy by comparison, that's just too bad. MLS is faced with either allowing the WFC foreign teams to dominate the scene, or – the route MLS has chosen – to enter some of its own teams and run the risk of seeing them humiliated.

That foreign teams are given special treatment was made clear when Vancouver Whitecaps, who play on artificial turf, were required to lay down a grass pitch for their WFC game against Manchester City. Similarly, Seattle Sounders welcomed Manchester United with a grass pitch newly laid over a plastic one considered good enough for MLS.

The grass did nothing for Sounders, who were beaten 7-0, an embarrassing defeat that brought an apology to the fans (over 67,000 had turned out) from coach Sigi Schmid. Things were not much better for LA Galaxy who were toyed with by Real Madrid in a 4-1 win. Galaxy coach Bruce Arena vented his frustration, declaring that the "whole tournament is set up to accommodate" the visiting teams, and that the needs of the MLS teams "are not addressed at all". The liberal substitution regulations, he said, greatly favoured the foreign teams which had much larger and stronger squads.

It might be thought that the WFC, so obviously upstaging MLS, so obviously taking fan money that might otherwise be spent on MLS, should simply be banned and that the US Soccer Federation should refuse to sanction the games. But any such move would quickly land the USSF in court, charged with "restraint of trade" - and they would lose the case.

There is also the rather awkward fact that the USSF benefits from these games, as it takes up to 9 per cent of the gate money - meaning an income of several million dollars.

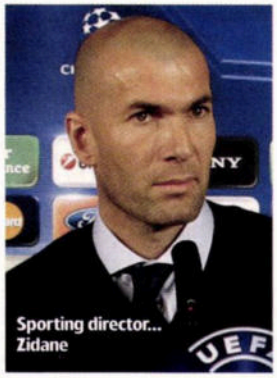
But the chances of the WFC lasting are probably not good. In the mid-1960s, Santos and Pele drew huge crowds in the USA, so more and more foreign teams were brought in. But the novelty wore thin, the calibre of the games decreased, ticket prices increased, and very quickly the market for exhibition games died. The fans stayed away. As Sam Goldwyn is alleged to have said: "If they don't wanna come, you can't stop them."

"Technically I'm no role model. When I played I usually shot with my shin"

New Juventus boss Antonio Conte cracks a joke about the lack of goals in his career as a midfield water carrier

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

IN


Sporting director... Zidane

EUROPE

ZINEDINE ZIDANE, who had working at Real Madrid as a special adviser to president Florentino Perez, was promoted to the post of sporting director to work more closely with coach Jose Mourinho, who has been given the title of "head of football operations".

RONALD KOEMAN is the new coach of Feyenoord, the club where he spent the final two seasons of his playing career. The former Holland international, who has also coached Ajax, PSV, Benfica and Valencia, replaced Mario Been, who left the Rotterdam club during the close season.

Former Real Madrid defender **FERNANDO HIERRO**, who won the Champions League three times and was capped by his country on 98 occasions, was appointed general manager of La Liga side Malaga. He recently stepped down as sporting director at the Spanish FA.

Spartak Moscow signed Holland midfielder **DEMY DE ZEEUW** from Ajax for a fee in the region of £6million.

Former Porto and Lithuania coach **JOSE COUCEIRO**, who was caretaker of Sporting Lisbon at the end of last season, took over at Lokomotiv Moscow during the Russian Premier League's summer break. Also during the break, **SERGEI BALAKHNIN** took charge of Rostov and **ANDREY KOBELEV** replaced Aleksandr Tarkhanov at Krylia Sovetov.

Former West Bromwich Albion boss **ROBERTO DI MATTEO** was appointed assistant manager to Andre Villas-Boas at Chelsea. Chelsea have also promoted **MICHAEL EMENALO** to the role of technical director.

Former Fulham, Real Sociedad and Coventry City manager **CHRIS COLEMAN** has taken over as coach of Larissa, who were relegated from the Greek Super League last season.

Ex-Germany midfielder and Champions League winner **DIETMAR HAMANN** began his managerial career in English football's semi-professional leagues with fifth-tier Stockport County.

Recently retired Swiss referee **MASSIMO BUSACCA** is the new head of the FIFA Refereeing Department.

SOUTH AMERICA

Arsenal's Brazilian midfielder **DENILSON** has returned home to join Sao Paulo on loan.

CONCACAF

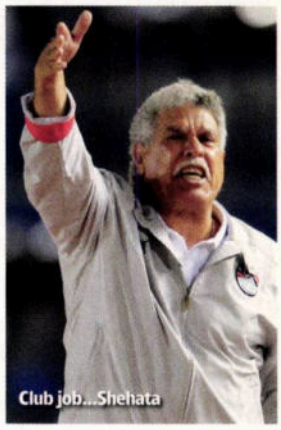
Thirty-four-year-old former Germany midfielder **TORSTEN FRINGS**, who was released by Werder Bremen at the end of last season, has joined MLS side Toronto.

Canadian move...Frings

AFRICA

JOHAN NEESKENS, who was twice a World Cup runner-up as a player with Holland, was appointed coach of South African side Mamelodi Sundowns.

Former national team coach **HASSAN SHEHATA** has taken charge of Egyptian league runners-up Zamalek.


Club job...Shehata

Liberia named Italian coach **ROBERTO LANDI** as their replacement for previous national boss Bertalan Bicskei who passed away following illness.

Brazilian coach **JULIO CESAR LEAL**, who was previously in charge at Moroka Swallows, has replaced Ruud Krol at South African champions Orlando Pirates.

ASIA

Former Liverpool and England striker **ROBBIE FOWLER** has joined Thailand's AFC Cup quarter-finalists Muang Thong United. The 36-year-old quit Perth Glory in June for family reasons and had origianlly implied that he was going to return to the UK from Australia to complete his coaching badges.

Rijkaard takes Saudi role

Former Barcelona boss Frank Rijkaard is the new coach of Saudi Arabia's national team.

The 48-year-old Dutchman, who led Barca to Champions League success in 2006, was in charge of the Holland side from 1998 to 2000.

His last assignment was in charge of Turkish club Galatasaray.

Saudi boss... Rijkaard

"And they said I didn't have the physique to play in central defence at the highest level"

Italy World Cup-winning captain Fabio Cannavaro retires at the age of 37

Transfers, sackings and loans

Guangzhou Evergrande broke the Chinese transfer record, paying £9million to sign Argentinian playmaker **DARIO CONCA** from Fluminense. The 28-year-old, who was voted the best player of 2010 in Brazil's Serie A, reportedly becomes the world's third highest-paid player, behind Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi.

Last season's A-League player of the season **MARCOS FLORES** left Adelaide United and joined Chinese Super League side Henan Jianye.

Veteran Brazil midfielder **ZE ROBERTO**, who holds the record for the most Bundesliga appearances made by a foreigner in German league history with 336 games, joined Qatar side Al Gharafa from Hamburg.

Uzbekistan's former Asian Player of the Year **SERVER DJEPAROV** has joined Saudi club Al Shabab from Seoul of South Korea.

AFC Champions League quarter-finalists Suwon Bluewings of South Korea signing Macedonia striker **STEVO RISTIC** from Russian side Amkar Perm.

IVAN HASEK, who led Al Ahli to the UAE championship in 2009, resigned as chairman of the Czech Republic football federation after agreeing to coach the Dubai-based side once again.

Former Iran and Bayern Munich striker **ALI DAEI** was named coach of Iran Pro League side Rah Ahan.

PAULO SILAS, who played for Brazil in the 1986 and 1992 World Cups, is the new coach of Qatar club Al Arabi.

EUROPE

FRANCO BALDINI will leave his position as assistant to coach Fabio Capello at the end of England's European Championship qualifying campaign later this year and take up a post with Serie A club Roma.

Former World Cup winner **PATRICK VIEIRA** announced his retirement to take up a newly created role with

Development...Vieira

Manchester City as football development executive. Among other things, the 35-year-old French midfielder – who was released by the Premier League side at the end of last season – will help the club with their development of young players.

Ex-France midfielder **OUSMANE DABO** has retired at the age of 34. Capped three times by his country, he played for Rennes, Internazionale, Parma, Atalanta, Monaco, Lazio and Manchester City before ending his career in MLS with New England Revolution.

Twenty-year-old Hearts defender **CRAIG THOMSON**, who was convicted of "lewd, libidinous and indecent behaviour" in June, has left the Scottish Premier Leaguer side.

Sacked...Hassan

AFRICA

HOSSAM HASSAN was sacked as coach of Zamalek after they finished second behind great rivals Al-Ahly at the end of the Egyptian league.

SOUTH AMERICA

Former Arsenal and Barcelona defender **SYLVINHO** has retired. The 37-year-old Brazilian full-back was released by Manchester City last summer and has now given up hope of making a comeback.

Sao Paulo sacked coach **PAULO CARPEGIANI** after three consecutive losses in the Brazilian championship.

Santos allowed Barcelona striker **KEIRRISON** to return to Spain after he failed to impress during his time on loan at the Brazilian club.

Former Brazil, Barcelona and Chelsea full-back **JULIANO BELLETTI**, scorer of the winning goal for Barca in the 2006 Champions League Final, has announced his retirement.

Croatian coach **MIROSLAV BLAZEVIC** parted company with China's Under-23 side after a 4-1 aggregate defeat by Oman meant they failed to qualify for next year's London Olympics.

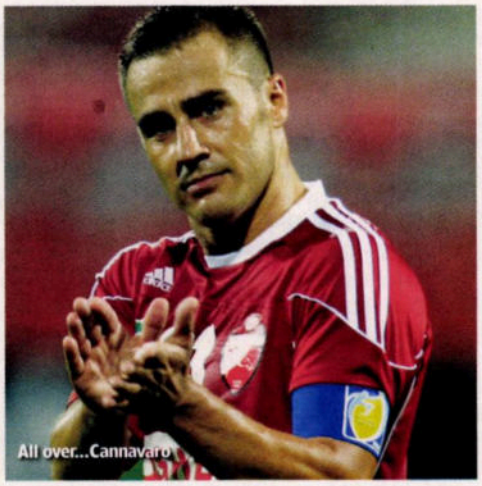
Retired...Belletti

OUT

Cannavaro calls it a day

Exactly five years to the day after he lifted the World Cup in Germany, the former Italy captain Fabio Cannavaro announced that he is retiring from football.

The 37-year-old defender spent last season playing for Al Ahli in Dubai.



All over...Cannavaro

Brian GLANVILLE

THE VOICE OF FOOTBALL

From Mugabe to Warner, Blatter's friends would be most people's enemies

Each picture tells a story, it is said, and what a repugnant, sordid story the photograph of Sepp Blatter cosying up to the murderous despot Robert Mugabe tells us all. What, in any case, was Blatter doing in Zimbabwe at all? We all know he has maintained shameless relationships with the likes of Argentina's anti-British, anti-Semitic Julio Grondona and, because he needed his CONCACAF votes, with the emetic Jack Warner.

Blatter has been not alone in toadying to Warner. The FA, their ex-top man Lord Triesman, various sports columnists who should have known better and the incomparable David Beckham – who even went coaching in Port of Spain – have all been guilty of taking this revolting figure at his own excessive valuation.

Now Warner has lost control of the CONCACAF votes, and been reduced in his own Trinidad into a kind of glorified inspector of drains, one assumes we shall hear little more of him – though how he has escaped from FIFA's so-called Ethics Committee with a large pension and the "presumption of innocence", who could ever say?

We still don't know what induced his former bosom buddy Chuck Blazer to blow the whistle on him. We still, alas, remember how even David Cameron and Prince William were reduced to flattering him in Zurich before the World Cup votes which, so predictably, went humiliating against England.

Now one of those meaningless, self-important and deluded parliamentary committees, dealing with culture, sport and whatever, has vapidly criticised FIFA and deplored the way the multimillion pound attempt by the FA to secure the 2018 World Cup for England failed. It wholly ignores the fact that the only way they could have spent the £15million (or whatever) to any effect was to use it to bribe the members of the World Cup choosing committee, as Qatar and – though they seem to have slipped off the hook – the Russians have done successfully, though there now seems to be some hope of the 2022 World Cup being taken away from wretched little Qatar, with its impossibly hot summers and negligible football status.

As for the FA's hapless World Cup committee, headed by the ineffectual but ever gainfully employed Andy Anson, their bleatings they "weren't aware" FIFA's World Cup choosing criteria would include the wish (what a fatuous joke!) to award the tournaments to countries which had never had one, still echo. What, no bribery?

Plus, there was Anson's ludicrous insistence the *Panorama* programme, just before the choices were announced, which detailed the chicanery which had been going on, had damaged the English bid. A bid which never had a chance.

Strange bedfellows... Blatter is greeted by Mugabe (left) on his visit to Zimbawe

> Now Warner has been reduced, in his own Trinidad, to a kind of glorified inspector of drains

West Ham's Olympic deal reeks but will still be waved through

When the somewhat malodorous affair of the Olympic Stadium and its football future is finally resolved, I've an idea that, despite all that has so suspiciously been going on, West Ham United will retain the rights to play there, even though it has been established that a woman called Dionne Knight, once employed by Newham council but now a leading figure in West Ham's campaign for the stadium, was paid £22,000 (on top of her £84,000 a year salary from the Legacy Committee) to help in "procurements", whatever that means.

It was also established that West Ham have been employing her boyfriend Ian Tompkins, former Newham council chief of public relations, as their Olympic Project director. That indefatigable and invaluable magazine *Private Eye* has thrown a modicum of fuel on the fire by declaring that Tomkins, while in office at Newham, spent no less than £15,000 on a hospitality box at Upton Park, while, in 2009, when Knight was head of procurement at Newham council, she put on a reception for 200 businessmen in the expensive Trevor Brooking suite at West Ham.

"Not me, guv!" has been the cry and no doubt the investigative committee set up now by the Legacy Committee will find everyone involved as white as snow.

Meanwhile, you still wonder why Tottenham Hotspur, in the face of huge opposition from their fans, should want to move so far away east from historic White Hart Lane. Every now and then, indeed, you still see Daniel Levy, their chairman, quoted on the possibility of tearing down White Hart Lane and rebuilding there or nearby, or alternatively building a new stadium (if the huge amount of money can be raised) at nearby Northumberland Park.

What, though, of the future of Leyton

Future imperfect...the decision to allow West Ham the use of the Olympic stadium has hit more murky waters

Orient, who fear they may be forced into extinction were West Ham to gain the Olympic Stadium? They saw a feasible compromise in being allowed to take over the nearby Olympic hockey stadium, but a chief functionary called Baroness Ford (who she?) has pompously, though vaguely, replied that the site will be needed for other purposes.

The cries of protest from those local elements whose very existence has been crushed by the building of the stadium have been coldly ignored. Oh, how one wishes Paris, with its huge, excellent and available Stade de France, could have beaten London to the "prize". In the meantime, playing fields and open spaces have been lost and stallholders who have been trading nearby, for decades in some cases, will be forced out of business. Not to mention the immense debts which almost all Olympiads, Los Angeles being the resourceful exception which proved the rule, will leave behind.

Do not ignore Olympic football's rich heritage

I write as one who covered three Olympiads and wrote a novel, *The Olympian* (just republished in the UK), which had its best reception in the USA and Russia (105 copies sold and, no, they never paid me). Yet I have always been interested in the Olympic football tournament, which began way back in 1908, when an all-amateur, all-English team beat Denmark in the White City Final and triumphed again in Stockholm in 1912. And I'll never forget that glorious Rome afternoon in 1960 at the Flaminio Stadium – where, under different nomenclature, the 1934 World Cup Final was played – when an all-British team held the Italy under-21 team to a 2-2 draw.

The Italians had skilfully decided that, since no footballer under that age could turn pro, then all of them had to be considered amateurs, so they put out a side glittering with talent such as the precocious teenaged Gianni Rivera. In goal that day was my friend Mike Pinner, five times a Cambridge Blue and Pegasus keeper, who turned out for Sheffield Wednesday and Aston Villa in the old first division. On Sundays he would play for my Sunday team, Chelsea Casuals, at outside left, because, despite the obscure standard, he enjoyed the company.

> No doubt the investigation, set up by the Legacy Committee, will find everyone involved as white as snow

It's said that, in the past, Olympic football made more money than any other event, including the athletics, though such is the surfeit of soccer we have in England now that the uptake of tickets has been poor. The Scots, Welsh and Irish associations have been castigated for boycotting our Olympic team, but it is surely hard to blame them.

FIFA has promised there will be no repercussions on the existence of all four British associations, but who can ever believe a word they say, with the likes of the repugnant Grondona and his South American ilk in the background, salivating at the prospect of cutting the British vote down from four to one.

Travelling man...Jesse Carver forsook Rome for England and third-tier Coventry City but did not stay long

English football's prophet without honour

This year sees the centenary of the birth of Jesse Carver, prophet without honour in his own country if ever there was one. Yet he had such a superb innovative spell in 1952 as coach to West Bromwich Albion, and could have had the England managership, had he wanted. I know, because I stood by his side in May 1955 at Rome's Hotel Quirinale when Stanley Rous, all-powerful secretary of the FA, offered him the job.

"It's about time we brought Walter back into the office," Rous said – Walter being Walter Winterbottom, an impressive figure but a very limited coach who, thanks to Rous' impregnable patronage, even survived two shock defeats – 6-3 at Wembley, 7-1 in Budapest – by Hungary in 1953-54. Rous plainly considered me, an obscure young English journalist, then working for *Corriere dello Sport* in Rome, of so little consequence that he could make the offer in front of me. And, indeed, I kept it to myself for many years.

What Jesse did at the end of that season was extraordinary. Leaving Roma, with whom he had challenged for the Campionato, he took over Coventry City, then mired in the Third Division South, taking with him the ebullient little Yorkshireman George Raynor, so successful as manager of Sweden, who had been running Lazio, the other big Roman club. Of course, Carver didn't stay. He never did for long. He flew to Rome, where the bombastic Count Vaselli was waiting, expecting him to join Lazio, but promptly went to Milan and joined Inter.

Later, he would indeed manage Lazio. Just as at various times he managed Juventus – winning the championship at his first attempt – Torino, Genoa and Sampdoria until, in the end, he simply ran out of clubs. Returning to England, he briefly coached at Spurs, then went into long, obscure retirement in Bournemouth, where he died this year.

A Liverpudlian, so closed where Raynor was so open, he was a centre-half for Blackburn Rovers and Newcastle. To the end he spoke appalling Italian, yet was still beloved by all his players. WS

Lovell soccer

WWW.LOVELLSOCCER.CO.UK

Freephone 0800 804 8521 | sales@lovellsoccer.co.uk

TAKE EVERY ADVANTAGE.

THE NIKE CTR360 MAESTRI II
THE ADVANTAGE OF ULTIMATE CONTROL.

NIKE CTR 360 MAESTRI II FG
Silver/Black/Blue
PRODUCT CODE: 9934

Control and passing pace are key to winning those pitch battles, The CTR 360 II Maestri Boot gives you a much greater control on the pitch.

Kanga-Lite synthetic leather mirrors the properties of natural Kangaroo leather, while offering durability in an easy to care for upper material.

£134.99 FREE PERSONALISATION FREE UK DELIVERY

FREE iD
Free Football Boot Personalisation

NIKE CTR 360 MAESTRI II FG
Gunmetal/White/Red
PRODUCT CODE: 9484
£134.99
FREE PERSONALISATION
FREE UK DELIVERY

FREE iD
Free Football Boot Personalisation

NIKE CTR360 LIBRETTO II AG
Gunmetal/White/red
PRODUCT CODE: 9482
£44.99
FREE PERSONALISATION

FREE iD
Free Football Boot Personalisation

Personalise Your Football Boots FOR FREE at Lovell Soccer
Log on to WWW.LOVELLSOCCER.CO.UK

WWW.LOVELLSOCCER.CO.UK

facebook.com/lovellsoccer twitter.com/lovellsoccer

Lovell soccer

TAKE EVERY ADVANTAGE.

THE NIKE MERCURIAL VAPOR SUPERFLY III THE ADVANTAGE OF SUPERIOR SPEED.

NIKE MERCURIAL VAPOR SUPERFLY III FG

Orange/Black

PRODUCT CODE: 9565

Mercurial Superfly III is tougher, faster and smarter than ever. A new adaptive traction plate features two pressure-activated studs for superior grip and instant acceleration no matter what the conditions.

£279.99 FREE PERSONALISATION FREE UK DELIVERY

FREE iD

Free Football Boot Personalisation

NIKE MERCURIAL VAPOR VII FG

Granite/Pink/White

PRODUCT CODE: 9458

£149.99

FREE PERSONALISATION FREE UK DELIVERY

FREE iD

Free Football Boot Personalisation

NIKE MERCURIAL VICTORY II FG

Granite/Pink/White

PRODUCT CODE: 9462

£49.99

FREE PERSONALISATION

FREE iD

Free Football Boot Personalisation

FREE UK DELIVERY On all orders over £100 at Lovell Soccer

Log on to WWW.LOVELLSOCCER.CO.UK

Uruguay claim the prize

Uruguay were always too good for Paraguay as they won a record 15th South American title. By Tim Vickery in Buenos Aires

FINAL

July 24 - Buenos Aires

URUGUAY 3
(Suarez 11, Forlan 41, 89)

PARAGUAY 0
HT: 2-0. Att: 52,000. Ref: Fagundes (Bra)

URUGUAY
Muslera - M Pereira, Lugano, Coates, M Caceres (Godin 88), Gonzalez, D Perez (Eguren 69), Arevalo, A Pereira (Cavani 63), Forlan, Suarez.

PARAGUAY
Villar - Piris, Veron, Da Silva, Marecos, Vera (Estigarribia 64), Ortigoza, V Caceres (H Perez 64), Riveros, Zeballos, (Barrios 76), Haedo Valdez.

3RD-PLACE PLAY-OFF

July 23 - La Plata

PERU 4
(Chiroque 41, Guerrero 63, 89, 90+2)

VENEZUELA 1
(Arango 77)
HT: 1-0. Att: 18,000. Ref: Roldan (Col)

PERU
Valverde - Revoredo, Ramos, Rodriguez, Corzo, Balbin, Lobaton (Guevara 60), Yotun, Cruzado (Advincula 78), Chiroque, Guerrero.

VENEZUELA
Vega - Rosales, Rey, Vizcarrondo, Cichero, Seijas (Lucena 45), Rincon, C Gonzalez (Arango 67), Orozco, Maldonado, Fedor (Rondon 61).
Sent off: Rincon 59mins.

Opener...Chiroque (no18) celebrates scoring in the third-place play-off

Uruguay flew back to a heroes' welcome after outclassing Paraguay to register a record 15th Copa America title, which leaves them with one win more than Argentina – an achievement made all the sweeter for taking place on Argentinian soil.

The Final in Buenos Aires was effectively decided as early as the 11th minute, when Luis Suarez made space inside Dario Veron to slip a left-footed volley low into the far corner.

Paraguay had little chance of mounting a comeback, having reached the Final without winning a single game. Their early form had been good, with coach Gerardo Martino commenting after the draws with Ecuador and Brazil that his team were playing better than in the World Cup. However, it was not a claim he could make after any of their three subsequent games.

Paraguay rode their luck to goalless draws and shoot-out wins in both their quarter-finals and semi-finals, against Brazil and Venezuela respectively. The Venezuelans, who were making their debut at the semi-final stage, were especially unfortunate. With midfield inspiration Tomas Rincon suspended, they fell short of their previous fluency but still managed to rattle the woodwork three times.

> Uruguay's record 15th Copa America title was made all the sweeter for taking place on Argentinian soil

Paraguay's famed resilience carried them through, but they arrived at the Final tired and under strength. Roque Santa Cruz, who had been looking sharp, had broken down yet again and fellow striker Lucas Barrios was also feeling the strain (he was a late substitute in the Final, but lasted just seven minutes before pulling up). Holding on for 120 minutes was always going to be a tall order and it was not clear how Paraguay could find the strength to hit back if they fell behind - or how they could cope with the Suarez-Diego Forlan partnership.

The Uruguay strike force had seen the team safely through against Peru in the semi-final. With La Plata's small pitch in deplorable condition, a classic was never on the cards. Injury to Edinson Cavani saw Uruguay coach Oscar Tabarez go with a midfield of markers and runners, ensuring defensive cover against the threat of Peru front runner Paolo Guerrero and Juan Manuel Vargas, who had been outstanding as the support striker.

Uruguay beat Peru with two goals from Suarez, who scored the first from a rebound after goalkeeper Raul Fernandez had pushed out a Forlan long-range special that may have been going wide. His second came after he latched on to an Alvaro Pereira through ball that put him behind the defensive line.

Final finish...Forlan scores Uruguay's third against Paraguay

Emphatic finish

And so to the Final, where if Suarez's early goal gave Uruguay a hand on the trophy then it was a hand-and-a-half just before half-time when the lead doubled with a goal that speaks volumes about the 2011 champions. Paraguay were trying to play their way out of defence when Nestor Ortigoza was caught in possession by Egidio Arevalo, who snapped into the tackle with typical bite and then fed Forlan in the left-hand channel for an emphatic finish.

It was Forlan's first goal of a tournament in which his finishing was often awry but the intelligence and vision of his play were as eye-catching as ever.

After the break Paraguay hauled their weary bodies forward and attempted to attack down the flanks, first throwing full-backs Ivan Piris and Elvis Marecos further forward, then making a double substitution, introducing Hernan Perez on the right and Marcelo Estigarribia, who had a fine tournament, on the left. There was one glimmer of hope, when Nelson Haedo Valdez latched on to a defence splitting chip from Ortigoza, but his left-footed volley looped over the keeper only to strike the bar. Seconds later Ortigoza prompted again, chipping Piris into space for a low cross which was nearly turned in at the near post by the arriving Cristian Riveros.

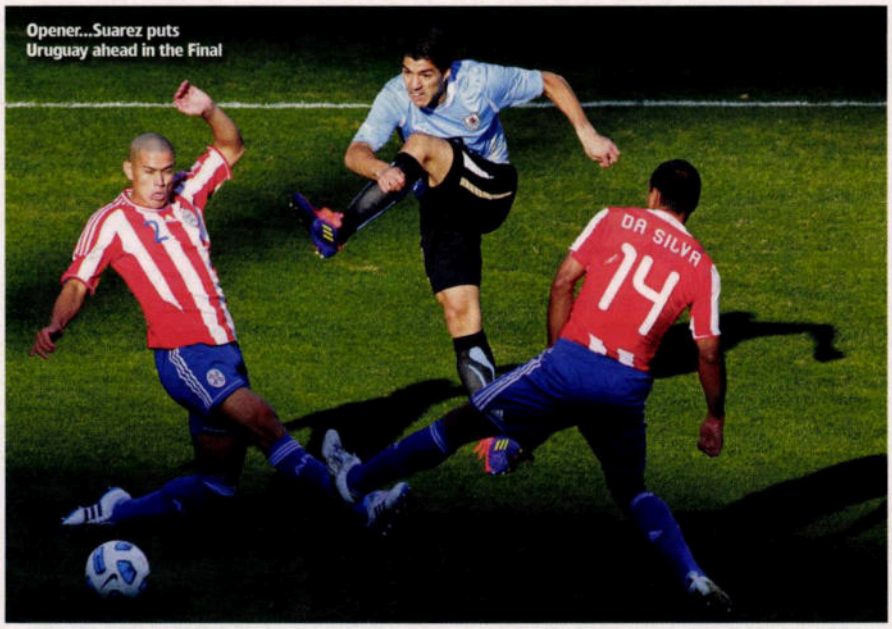
Cavani appeared soon after the hour mark to give Uruguay more attacking threat, but they were happily running down the clock - a task made even easier in the last few minutes when Barrios pulled up with a muscle problem and

Triumph...Uruguay celebrate in Buenos Aires

limped away. He had been the last of Paraguay's three substitutes, and so they were forced to play out the final minutes with 10 men.

Uruguay caught them on the break in the final minute, Cavani's ball in from the left was nodded down by Suarez to allow Forlan to score his second and complete the scoring at 3-0 with another example of the wonderful understanding between the team's strikers and their capacity to put their individual ability at the service of a collective team effort.

Suarez, razor sharp throughout, was deservedly named player of the tournament and narrowly missed out on being the top goalscorer. Peru's Guerrero finished with five, one more than Suarez, after scoring a hat-trick in his side's 4-1 win over Venezuela in the third-place play-off. Like the semi-final against Paraguay it was a game that Venezuela dominated for long periods, losing their way after Rincon was sent off for the second time in the tournament. Guerrero snatched the top marksman's slot with two goals in the last three minutes.



Opener...Suarez puts Uruguay ahead in the Final

Suarez, though, was more than satisfied with his winner's medal, celebrated in front of a giant crowd in the Monumental stadium in Buenos Aires. Uruguayans had come flooding across the border in search of tickets, and with Argentina having a large Paraguayan community a superb atmosphere was guaranteed.

In fact, one of the highlights of the 2011 Copa was the presence of partisan supporters in the stadiums. The games were played in the mid-winter chill and, although the football did not always live up to expectations, in the stands the blood was aflame.

There are a number of reasons for this. Argentina is a big country and has a frontier with Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay, and many games were played near the border. The Chilean fans, for example, flocked across to follow their team.

Even in the cold there was an incentive to travel because, barring the odd injury, the star names – such as Lionel Messi, Alexis Sanchez, Neymar, Forlan and Suarez – were all here on parade. Some recent Copas have been full of experimental sides but, Costa Rica and Mexico aside, that was not the case this time.

It is also clear that the continent is becoming richer, with more people able to travel and follow their team in the Copa America. The Uruguayan contingent, at least, could have no complaints about their travel plans – they were on the scene to celebrate a historic triumph.

Back to the drawing board..the role of Messi (second right) as a false number nine was scrapped by Argentina after two games

Big guns bow out

The exit of Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Colombia at the quarter-final stage is proof of South America's strength in depth, argues Tim Vickery

The essence of the 2011 Copa America could be found in the quarter-finals. Going into the round there were four clear favourites – Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Colombia – and all four were eliminated: by Uruguay, Paraguay, Venezuela and Peru, respectively.

Over the two days of the quarter-final weekend, the two big themes of this year's Copa could hardly have been clearer.

First, there was proof of the extraordinary strength in depth of international football in South America. This was highlighted in last year's World Cup – with a solid performance from all the continent's teams, spearheaded by Uruguay, fifth in qualification, who reached the last four – and it was all the clearer in Argentina, where teams who had not made it to South Africa were also highly competitive.

Fifteen years on, the introduction of the marathon qualification format for South American World Cup qualifying has clearly brought about a revolution in standards. The traditionally weaker teams have enjoyed the benefits of regular competitive games, with guaranteed income and the chance to hire good coaches and invest in youth development.

The second big theme of the 2011 Copa was that this was a tournament where defence won out over attack - perhaps boosted by the cold weather and the occasional poor pitch. Uruguay coach Oscar Tabarez made the point before the semi-finals that "the teams which have come out to take the initiative have gone out". Then, for the Peru semi, he selected a midfield of limited creative capacity but with plenty of lung power and marking. Thus covered, this was one game where the favourites did not fall.

There was undeniably an element of misfortune about the elimination of the four quarter-final favourites. Paraguay coach Gerardo Martino confessed that his team had been lucky to hold Brazil until the penalty shoot-out, where legendary Paraguayan resilience was topped off by a superb performance from Justo Villar in goal.

Uruguay similarly could count on an excellent display from their keeper, Fernando Muslera, as they took Argentina to spot-kicks.

Colombia missed a penalty and hit the woodwork twice before falling to extra-time goals against Peru. And Chile also rocked the post and the bar, and came close on several occasions in a furious second-half assault against Venezuela.

An old flaw

The favourites, though, all contributed to their own downfall. Chile, for example, were undone by an old flaw: their inability to deal with set-pieces played into their box, which cost them both goals in their 2-1 defeat. In possession, though, they were once again a joy, showing that there is life after the regime of Marcelo Bielsa. Claudio Borghi's side defend deeper but still seek to attack, which opens up more space for their creative talents. Indeed, they may have made more progress had playmaker Matias Fernandez not picked up an early injury, but their attacking play was still more convincing than that of any other team in the tournament.

Colombia, for example, would dearly love to have someone with the individual talent of Alexis Sanchez.

The Colombians flattered to deceive, the consequence of being placed in the weakest

group. There was much to admire in their play. They are making progress and were beginning to find some interesting flexibility in their midfield, but Peru coach Sergio Markarian summed them up to perfection before the quarter-final. Colombia, he said, were a team that were good technically and tactically, excellent physically, but lacking a touch of fantasy in the final third. Peru blocked Colombia's attacking full-backs, held on in relative comfort, and took advantage of mistakes by keeper Luis Martinez to win the game in extra time.

Martinez had hardly been troubled by Argentina when Colombia met the hosts in the second group game and it was after this match that Argentina were forced to ditch a year's planning. Coach Sergio Batista had prepared for the Copa by building a Buenos Aires imitation of Barcelona, playing a 4-3-3 with Lionel Messi in his club position of the false number nine.

There was promising evidence from some of

Not all bad...Neymar (left) and Brazil will have learned from their Copa experience

Argentina's friendlies, but as soon as the competitive action began it was apparent that the team did not work. Desperately stale and disappointing draws against Bolivia and Colombia obliged a rethink and for the third match changes were made. Messi dropped to a more traditional role, with Gonzalo Higuain coming in to play as the target man, and there was a clear improvement, with Messi laying on some sumptuous passes as Argentina charged to a 3-0 win over the experimental Costa Rica side. But problems were still apparent, and Uruguay in the quarter-finals were clearly going to be a much stiffer test.

Argentina's defensive deficiencies from set-pieces were exposed yet again when Diego Perez poked Uruguay into an early lead. Messi, in an inspired first half, laid on an equaliser for Higuain, but although Perez was sent off before half-time, Argentina's numerical superiority was never apparent. It is hard to open up the pitch without quality attacking full-backs, something Argentina badly lack. It is one thing for Messi to play at Barcelona alongside Dani Alves, another thing in the national team, with Pablo Zabaleta at right-back and 38-year-old right-footed Javier Zanetti at left-back.

For all their attacking talent, Argentina still look some way off finding a team. The frustration of 18 years without a senior title was evident at the end of extra time with Messi's final surge through the Uruguay defence. At the last minute he was just crowded out and plunged to the floor in despair, wondering what on earth he has to do to win a major trophy with his country.

> For Brazil, the worrying lesson from Argentina's build-up to this Copa is that friendlies can be such unreliable witnesses

Brazil, of course, will hope their experience in Argentina will stand them in good stead when they host the World Cup in 2014. Before then, their only competitive test at senior level is the semi-serious Confederations Cup. The worrying lesson from Argentina's build-up to this Copa is that friendlies can be such unreliable witnesses.

Not a disaster

Brazil coach Mano Menezes should have made plenty of useful observations from the competitive evidence of the Copa. His team were unlucky to be knocked out in the quarter-finals against Paraguay in La Plata, where a small pitch in poor condition made it difficult to force a breakthrough. Brazil's campaign was not a disaster, but it was certainly a disappointment - which may be no bad thing.

Much hyped playmaker Ganso, key to Brazil's hopes in 2014, has seen that life is harder outside the comfort zone of domestic football. He gave the ball away time and time again, and needs to learn that to play well is to choose well. He can split a defence with a killer ball, but he needs the patience and wisdom to understand when to try it and when to set it up.

Brazil's counter-attack continued to look dangerous and there were times when the team pressed collectively well, won possession and broke at pace. But the counter will be a weapon of limited use in 2014 and more midfield elaboration is needed. Lucas Leiva in the holding role must take more responsibility for initiating the play. Further up, serious thought must surely be given to the balance of the attack, and specifically the importance of a centre-forward. For all the fluidity of Alexandre Pato's movement, throughout the first year of the Menezes reign Brazil have looked more effective with a target man.

Menezes must also surely review one of the most baffling selection decisions of the Copa. Brazil played some of their best football in the tournament during the first half of the 2-2 draw against Paraguay in the group phase. They were a goal up at the interval, scored by Jadson, who, in flashes, had combined fruitfully with Ganso, forming one of those little partnerships that are so useful inside a team.

To save him from a red card, Jadson was removed at half-time and did not reappear in the competition, Menezes choosing to recall the largely ineffective Robinho.

Brazil were never quite the same again. Their problems, and those of Argentina, are useful to re-enforce a central point about football which often gets lost amid all the hype surrounding outstanding individuals. In a team game, the collective blend is paramount. The big two are struggling to find it, which, given the strength in depth of South America's national teams, meant that this Copa could not come close to serving up a third consecutive Argentina-Brazil final.

Clincher...Juan Manuel Vargas scores Peru's second in the quarter-finals against Colombia

Bolivia, Ecuador and invitees go out early

Understrength Costa Rica and Mexico fail to make the knockout rounds

Bolivia are frequently served up for the Copa hosts in the opening game in the expectation that they will be rolled over. But this time it seemed to bring out the best in the them as they got the competition underway with a 1-1 draw against Argentina – a result that set the tone for what was to come.

The three groups each had a clear favourite – in Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay – and, remarkably, none of them managed to win either of their first two games. All six games were drawn, with Argentina coming from behind in the first game (Bolivia) and deserving to lose the second (Colombia), Brazil were just seconds from defeat against Paraguay, and Uruguay also had to chase the game to draw with Peru.

The three traditional big guns all went into their final group game with the pressure on, but bolstered by the fact that eight of the 12 teams in the Copa make it through to the quarter-finals. And all saved themselves in relative comfort because their third opponents were hardly the most exacting.

Brazil faced an Ecuador team in transition, and came through 4-2 despite a bad night for goalkeeper Julio Cesar, while Argentina and Uruguay faced the invited nations from the CONCACAF region, both of whom had brought young, experimental sides.

> The three groups each had a clear favourite but none of them managed to win either of their opening two games

Unsurprisingly, Uruguay duly inflicted Mexico's third defeat. In the warm-up matches the Mexican side looked limited but organised, but this virtue was compromised when on the eve of the tournament eight of their players were caught indulging in night-time high jinks and sent home. The bright spot for the Mexicans was the form of tall, central midfielder Jorge Enriquez, 20, who looks a real find.

No easy ride...Jhasmani Campos (right) and Bolivia made life hard for the hosts Argentina in the opening game

Costa Rican hopes

Argentina managed to save themselves by beating what amounted to a glorified Costa Rica under-22 side, the bulk of the squad being drawn from graduates of the 2009 World Youth Cup. It is a generation that is inspiring great hopes in Costa Rica, with left-footed striker Joel Campbell looking especially promising. But they were no match for Argentina on a night when Lionel Messi found his form.

A win over Bolivia took Costa Rica close to the quarter-finals, but they were the third-placed side who missed out. While they could be relatively pleased with their displays, and delighted with the experience acquired, there was little surprise they fell early, nor that the same fate befell Bolivia, Mexico and Ecuador.

But with so many drawn games, the group phase was extremely tight - as shown by the last group game clash between Paraguay and Venezuela. The Paraguayans were 3-1 up going into the final five minutes, and on the verge of topping the group. However, Venezuela hit back to draw 3-3, with their injury-time equaliser coming from a corner. Ever the showman, keeper Renny Vega came up field to flick on the cross and Grendy Perozo scored at the far post. So, instead of winning the group, Paraguay qualified for the quarters as the second best of the third-placed teams - not that it stopped them grinding their way to the Final.

Tim Vickery

TEAM BY TEAM

Tim Vickery assesses how the hosts and the other South American sides fared

The real legacy of the 2011 Copa will take years to become clear, but the tournament's aim of helping to decentralise Argentinian football could hardly have come at a more interesting moment.

On the Sunday before the tournament began, Buenos Aires giants River Plate were relegated to the second division by Belgrano of Cordoba, which is one of the country's major cities in which football has never made much of an impression. However, Cordoba was one of the main host venues for the Copa, along with Santa Fe, where the stadium of first division club Colon was used. Near the border with Chile, another host city San Juan also had a stadium built especially for the Copa.

The excessive centralisation around Buenos Aires means football in the country is falling short of its potential, but the possibility now exists of a nationwide architecture for the sport, aided by the investments in stadiums and infrastructure made for the Copa. In coming years it will be interesting to see the extent to which this year's tournament gave a boost to the process.

In the shorter term, the principal legacy of the Copa lay in the opportunity for the South American sides to prepare for the next set of World Cup qualifiers, which get underway in October.

Looking good...Uruguay's future seems to be in good hands

WINNERS

URUGUAY: The title confirms that last year's World Cup run was no fluke. Some of the current team might not make it to Brazil in three year's time, but excellent performances from Uruguay's youth sides mean that there is a conveyor belt of youngsters ready to step up, with three of the Copa squad being graduates from the 2009 under-20s. More will be gently phased in during the qualifiers.

RUNNERS UP

PARAGUAY: Reaching the Final without winning a game is all very well, but in the qualifiers five straight draws followed by a defeat will not be of much use. Argentina are showing interest in impressive coach Gerardo Martino, who might think he has taken the current side as far as they can go.

THIRD

PERU: The big aim was to come out of the Copa with pride intact and the respect of their rivals ahead of the qualifiers. All this was achieved, especially bearing in mind the injuries suffered in the build-up to the tournament. Coach Sergio Markarian is constructing a solid side whose sights will be firmly set on a first World Cup since 1982.

FOURTH

VENEZUELA: With realistic hopes of qualifying for their first-ever World Cup, their historic fourth place could have been even better as they were unlucky to lose their semi and, despite the scoreline, had the bulk of the play in the third-place play-off. Coach Cesar Farias has a squad full of options, which is an important factor in the marathon qualification campaign.

ELIMINATED IN THE QUARTER FINALS

ARGENTINA: Following their early elimination it seems that Sergio Batista's days as national coach may well be numbered. But no matter whether he stays or goes, whoever picks the team needs to find a collective blend, presumably with new full-backs and a rejuvenated defence.

BRAZIL: They look closer to having a team than Argentina, with talent better distributed around the positions, but midfield passing could still improve and the need for a target man will surely be debated as the pressure cranks up a little on coach Mano Menezes. They may regret all the more the fact that they have no qualifiers to whip the team into shape for 2014, since evidence from friendlies can be so unreliable.

CHILE: Remain the neutrals' favourites, with the team under Claudio Borghi every bit as attractive as during the reign of Marcelo Bielsa. Former great Ivan Zamorano said during the tournament that he would trade all his goals for the chance of playing for 15 minutes with the current line-up - an indication of the enthusiasm being generated. Borghi's deeper defensive line opens up more space for the counter but increases the chances of the team conceding free-kicks near their own goal - where the defence always looks so vulnerable.

Solid...Colombia just need an extra spark

COLOMBIA: A strong, solid side showing signs of progress with some neat exchanging of positions in the midfield. But without a Messi, Sanchez or Neymar to take defenders out of the game they can look stale against organised defences.

Best ever...Roberto Rosales (left) helped Venezuela to a historic fourth place

ELIMINATED IN THE GROUP STAGE

BOLIVIA: Lived a false dawn after holding Argentina to a draw and reality soon reared its ugly head when they tried and failed to produce something more expansive in their next two games. No one will relish the trip to the extreme altitude of La Paz, but the team's lack of quality and physicality makes it hard to imagine how they will pick up points away from home.

ECUADOR: Just like Peru and Colombia before them, they are finding that replacing a golden generation is very difficult. The current side are below par and coach Reinaldo Rueda is hanging on by his fingernails.

WorldSoccer

SEND THIS COUPON TO

UK World Soccer Subscriptions, FREEPOST CY1061, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH16 3BR
OVERSEAS & USA World Soccer Subscriptions, PO Box 272, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH16 3FS, UK (please attach correct postage)

I WOULD LIKE TO SUBSCRIBE (UK ONLY)

- ☐ **6-monthly Direct Debit £20.25 (saving 20%)** full rate £25.35, save £10.20 a year
- ☐ **1 year £43.15 (save 14%)** full rate £50.70, save £7.60
- ☐ **2 years £81.00 (save 20%)** full rate £101.40, save £20.40

OVERSEAS SUBSCRIPTION

- ☐ USA 1 year **full price $121.49 / 30% discount price $85.00**
- ☐ USA 2 years **full price $242.98 / 32% discount price $162.80**
- ☐ Europe 1 year **full price €83.10 / 30% discount price €58.00**
- ☐ Europe 2 years **full price €166.20 / 33% discount price €111.00**
- ☐ R.O.W. 1 year **full price £87.62 / 30% discount price £61.00**
- ☐ R.O.W. 2 years **full price £175.24 / 33% discount price £117.00**

YOUR DETAILS

Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss: Forename:

Surname:

If you would like to receive emails from IPC Media and World Soccer containing news, special offers and product and service information and take part in our magazine research via email, please include your email below.

Email:

Address:

Postcode:

Home Tel No: (inc. area code)

Would you like to receive messages to your mobile from IPC Media and World Soccer containing news, special offers, product and service information and take part in our research? If yes, please include your mobile phone number here.

Mobile:

Year of birth: Y Y Y Y

PAYMENT DETAILS

I enclose cheque/international money order for £_____ made payable to IPC Media Ltd.

Or please debit my ☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa ☐ Visa Debit ☐ Amex ☐ Maestro (UK only)

Maestro Only

Expiry date: / / Card Issue No /Start Date

Signature: (I am over 18)

Pay £20.25 by 6 monthly Direct Debit

INSTRUCTION TO YOUR BANK OR BUILDING SOCIETY TO PAY BY DIRECT DEBIT

For office use only. Originator's reference - 764 221

A/C no

DIRECT Debit

Name of bank:

Address:

Postcode:

Account name:

Sort code: Account no:

Please pay IPC Media Ltd direct debits from the account detailed on this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with IPC Media Ltd and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my bank or building society.

Signature: Date:
(I am over 18)

Gift available to new UK subscribers only. Direct Debit offer is available to UK subscribers only. Please allow up to six weeks for delivery of your first subscription issue (up to eight weeks overseas). The full subscription rate is for 1 year, 13 issues and includes postage and packaging. If the magazine ordered changes frequency per annum, we will honour the number of issues paid for, not the term of the subscription. Gifts are not available for magazines delivered to overseas addresses. This offer is subject to a minimum term of 12 months. Your free gift is subject to availability and will be delivered separately within 28 days after your first payment has been taken. Offer closes 30th September 2011. **For enquiries from the UK please call: 0844 848 0848, for overseas please call: +44 (0)330 3330 233 fax: 0845 675 9101 or e-mail: ipcsubsquadrantsubs.com.** World Soccer, published by IPC Media Limited, will collect your personal information to process your order. World Soccer, and IPC Media would like to contact you by post or telephone to promote and ask your opinionon our magazines and services. Please tick here if you prefer not to hear from IPC Media ☐. IPC Media may occasionally pass your details to carefully selected organisations so that they can contact you by telephone or post with regards to promoting and researching their products and services. Please tick here if you prefer not to be contacted ☐. IPC Media who publish **World Soccer**, would like to send messages to your mobile with offers from carefully selected organisations and brands, promoting and researching their products and services. If you want to receive messages please tick here ☐. IPC would like to email you with offers from carefully selected organisations and brands, promoting and researching their products and services. If you want to receive these messages please tick here ☐.

14C

GREAT SAVINGS WORLDWIDE

Live outside the UK?

SAVE UP TO 33%

USA 1 YEAR
YOU PAY $85.00, saving 30%
on the full price of $121.49

USA 2 YEARS
YOU PAY $162.80, saving 32%
on the full price of $242.98

EUROPE 1 YEAR
YOU PAY €58.00, saving 30%
on the full price of €83.10

EUROPE 2 YEARS
YOU PAY €111.00, saving 33%
on the full price of €166.20

Rest Of World 1 YEAR
YOU PAY £61.00, saving 30%
on the full price of £87.62

Rest Of World 2 YEARS
YOU PAY £117.00, saving 33%
on the full price of £175.24

WorldSoccer®

ONE WORLD, ONE GAME

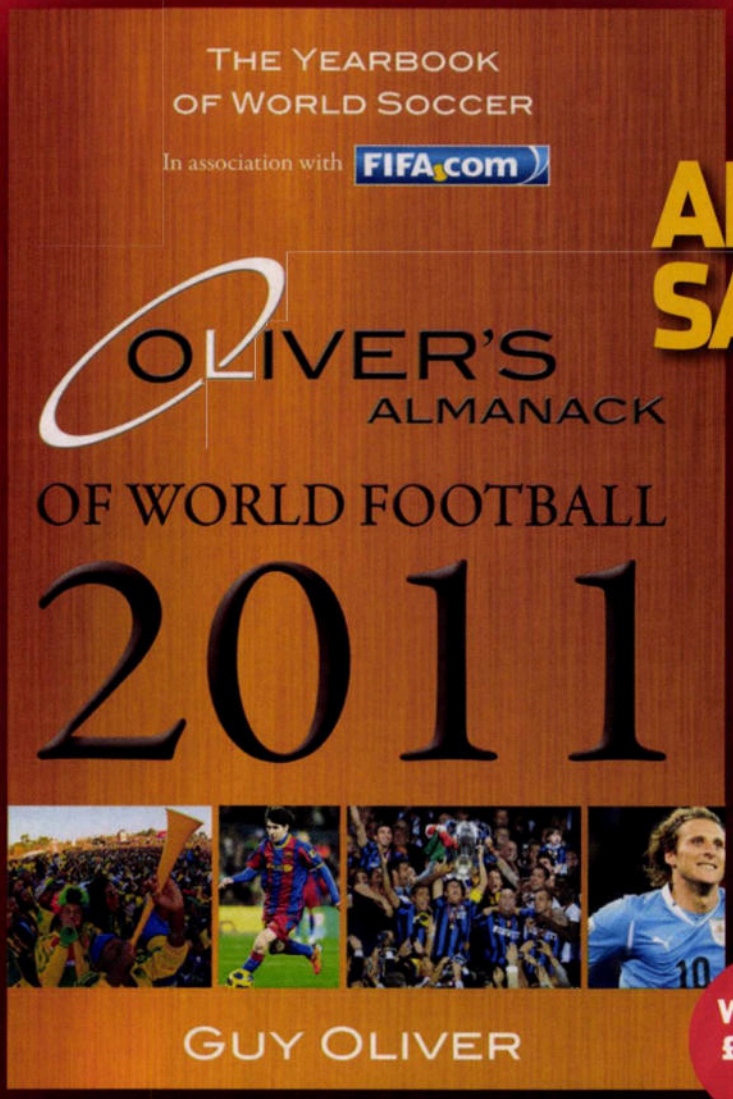
THE DIRECT DEBIT GUARANTEE • This Guarantee is offered by all banks and building societies that accept instructions to pay Direct Debits • If there are any changes to the amount, date or frequency of your Direct Debit IPC Media Ltd. will notify you 10 working days in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed. If you request IPC Media Ltd. to collect a payment, confirmation of the amount and date will be given to you at the time of the request • If an error is made in the payment of your Direct Debit, by IPC Media Ltd. or your bank or building society you are entitled to a full and immediate refund of the amount paid from your bank or building society – If you receive a refund you are not entitled to, you must pay it back when IPC Media Ltd. asks you to • You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by simply contacting your bank or building society. Written confirmation may be required. Please also notify us.

Order online

Order hotline

SPECIAL SUBSCRIPTION OFFER

FREE BOOK!



Oliver's Almanack of World Football 2011

AND SAVE 20%

Oliver's Almanack of World Football 2011 covers every league and every cup played on every continent during 2010. It is THE yearbook of world soccer.

The most comprehensive yearbook about world football on the market, Oliver's Almanack is your 1056 page definitive guide to football wherever it is played.

WORTH £25.00

Pay just £20.25 every 6 months by Direct Debit!*

*UK subscribers only

worldsoccersubs.com/iwssb

0844 848 0848*

LINES OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK, 8am-9pm UK TIME.
QUOTE CODE 14C
*Overseas customers please call +44 (0)330 3330 233

CARLING
CARLING
CARLING
CARLING
CARLING
CARLING
CARLING
CARLING

THE LEAGUE THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

As the Premier League begins its 20th season, Glenn Moore considers how the TV-led competition has revolutionised the game around the globe

In 1992, Manchester United were owned by the son of a local butcher, Arsenal run by a family of Old Etonians and Liverpool controlled by a Mersey pools magnate. None, however, were English champions; that was Leeds United, whose unexpected title success had been given a late, significant push over the line by Eric Cantona, one of the 11 foreigners who started matches on the first weekend of England's new FA Premier League.

On August 15, 1992, the big story on the opening day of the season was the two goals scored by Blackburn Rovers' Alan Shearer, a £3.2million British record signing, in a 3-3 draw at Crystal Palace. To all intents and purposes it was, however, just another opening day, not the dawn of an era. *World Soccer*'s August 1992 edition noted the "new, lucrative, TV-adorned high-profile competition" declaring it was "new in name but, in reality, little more than a dressed-up version of the English First Division". Indeed, that edition contained a boot advertisement with the strapline: "England gave soccer its past. Italy gives soccer the future."

As the Premier League begins its 20th season we know better. For good or ill the league has transformed football in England, in Europe, and even in Africa and Asia. It may not be the best around – depending on your prejudices that could be La Liga or the Bundesliga [see page 33] – but it is the most influential. On and off the pitch, even in the heavens – where it has fuelled the spread of satellite television – the Premier League has changed the game.

One aspect cannot be disputed: the league has been an incredible commercial success. Real Madrid and Barcelona top the annual Deloitte "rich list" and pay the highest wages, but that is largely because they cream off much of La Liga's television income. The Premier League has a more equitable distribution, with even last season's lowest earners, Blackpool, picking up £39m in TV income – compared to £60m for champions Manchester United. Taken collectively, Premier League clubs earn the greatest revenues and pay the highest wages. Which, forget all the guff about wanting to play at "the home of football", is the main reason so many foreign players go to England. The 11 on that opening day in 1992 were pathfinders, and nearly 1,300 foreign footballers have since played in the Premier League. Most weekends two-thirds of the starting XIs are ineligible for the national side.

There has been an enormous benefit. In terms of playing personnel this has been a golden age. Gianfranco Zola, Thierry Henry, Dennis Bergkamp, Cristiano Ronaldo, Didier Drogba, Cesc Fabregas, Peter Schmeichel, Carlos Tevez and many others have all played at least five seasons in the Premier League. It is true that the biggest names such as Lionel Messi, Kaka and Zinedine Zidane preferred Spain, and Ronaldo has now gone there too, but the Premier League attracts many players just below that level, such as Mario Balotelli, Fernando Torres and Dimitar Berbatov. It also retains its own. In 1992, Paul Gascoigne, Des Walker and David Platt, three of England's leading players in their run to the semi-finals of the 1990 World Cup, played in Serie A. Their modern equivalents, Wayne Rooney, Rio Ferdinand and Steven Gerrard, have spent their careers in England.

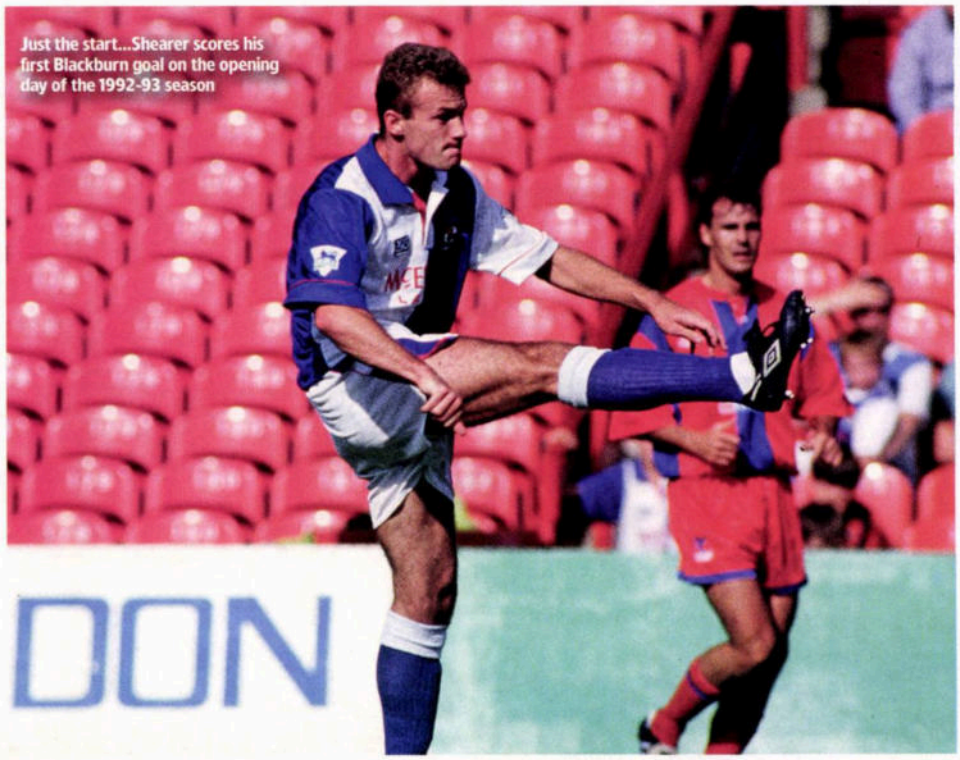
Made in Italy...Zola proved to be a huge success at Chelsea

> For a long time I resisted [Far East tours] but, as the Premier League becomes more of a world league, it's important that we develop our fan base **Arsene Wenger**

One consequence of this is that English clubs are, once again, major players in Europe. Twenty years ago they were still finding their way following the lifting of the Heysel ban. There was no danger of fixture congestion in the Premier League's opening season as all English clubs were out of Europe by the first week of November, with Leeds United despatched embarrassingly by Scottish champions Rangers.

Now England's Champions League quartet customarily cruise through the group stage and are regular finalists. Indeed, between 1992 and 2001 English clubs made one appearance in the Final: Manchester United in 1999. In the last 10 seasons they have made seven, more than any other country. England now lead the UEFA coefficient rankings, from Spain and Germany. In 2000 England were fifth; in 1992 – in part due to the post-Heysel ban – they were 13th.

The UEFA Cup/Europa League is a


Just the start...Shearer scores his first Blackburn goal on the opening day of the 1992-93 season

DON

different matter. Such are the financial rewards for the big clubs of reaching the Champions League qualifying places, and the cost of relegation for smaller clubs, weakened teams are routinely fielded in UEFA's lesser competition to keep key players fit for league matches.

Champions League success, combined with the multi-national nature of the Premier League and its all-action nature, has made the competition into the world's most watched sports league, with South Sudan recently becoming the 212th territory to take broadcasts. The rising value of overseas television rights (from £60m in 2001-02 to £460m last season - more than the other four major leagues combined) has counterbalanced a relative stagnation in UK fees (£594m last season).

None of this has happened by accident. The Premier League conducts market research in 30 countries with a view to understanding and expanding the competition's attraction. This gives rise to such products as Premier League Match Attax trading cards (similar to Panini) being produced in Vietnamese and Russian. During this pre-season, clubs played more than 40 friendlies in a dozen overseas countries spanning five continents. Even Arsenal, who usually prepare in seclusion in Austria, headed for the Far East, with a reluctant Arsene Wenger admitting: "For a long time I resisted, but as the Premier League becomes more and more a world league, it's important we develop our fan-base. China is a massive country where football is developing and the Premier League is a world brand. You do not want to miss out [on] so many potential fans."

Marketing-related signings

Arsenal are among several clubs with foreign language websites. There has even been the occasional misguided marketing-related signing: witness Manchester United's Chinese striker Dong Fangzhuo, Arsenal's Japanese midfielder Junichi Inamoto and Everton's abortive attempts to recruit a Thai capable of playing in the Premier League.

Manchester United have led the way in monetising their foreign support with their overseas income escalating since the Glazers took over with companies (usually foreign-owned such as Audi, Airtel Africa and Singha) paying £120m between them, including promotional activity, simply to be commercial partners last season. Their 16million Facebook followers are viewed as another potential source of income.

It was this global reach – and the example of American Football's annual NFL match at Wembley - that drew the Premier League into proposing a "39th game", a round played overseas. The ➤

Money for nothing

Why the Premier League was formed

To understand why the Premier League came into being you have to go back to the very beginning, to 1863, when the Football Association was established, and 1888, when the Football League was founded.

The FA was formed by private clubs based in and around London whose members were largely former public schoolboys. They had often gone to the great universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and believed playing football was part of maintaining "a sound mind in a healthy body". Usually of independent wealth they played for fun.

The League was based in England's industrial midlands and north, and formed by clubs who – though they may have been founded by churches or factory social clubs – paid their players. For them football had already become a business.

League clubs soon dominated on the pitch, but off it the blazers conceded control less easily. As the decades went by the two organisations became embroiled in a struggle for power which increasingly hindered the progress of the national team – the FA's flagship and leading source of income. By the 1980s it was obvious that, unlike in successful World Cup nations such as Germany and Brazil, the clubs were in charge.

However, the 92-club Football League was ridden by internal disputes with the established First Division clubs resenting a structure that, to their minds, enabled their lower league brethren to leech off them. When the bigger clubs began agitating for a breakaway league the FA saw their chance. A series of meetings led to the 1991 *Blueprint for the Future of Football* in which the FA shamelessly proposed the creation of a Premier League to "first, [establish] The Football Association as the Government of the game in England; second, [establish] the England team at the apex of the pyramid of playing excellence".

Both aims have failed. For the FA, the league has become Frankenstein's monster, tormenting its creator. Since Euro 96 the national team has failed to pass the quarter-finals of a major competition and, as the Jack Wilshere/England under-21s imbroglio this summer underlined, the FA continues to have difficulties gaining players' release from clubs. Along the way the "FA" prefix has been quietly dropped from the Premier League's title and the FA itself is now so conflicted by the inclusion of Premier League personnel it is the subject of a government inquiry into football governance.

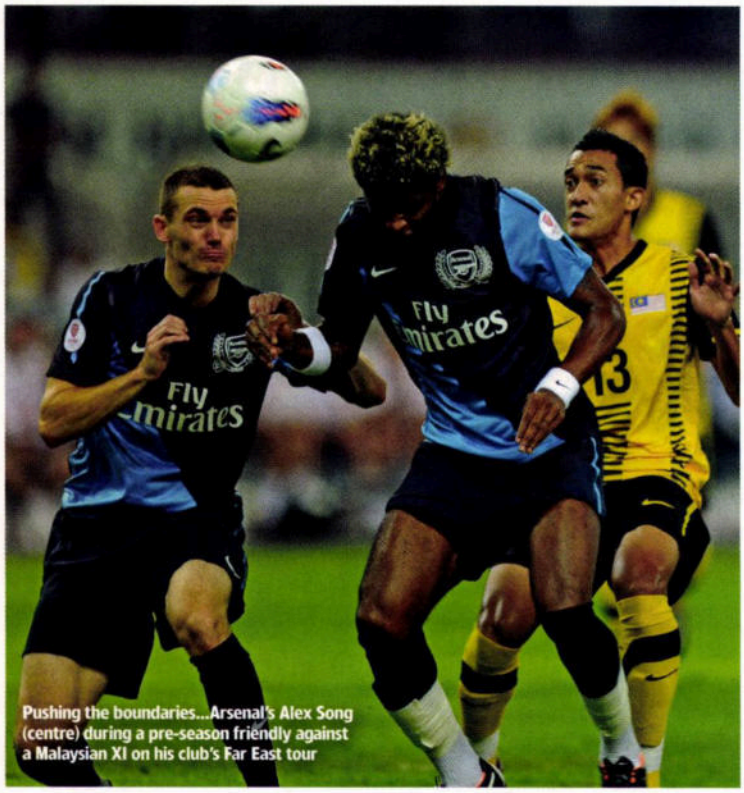
"I was bitterly disappointed there would be no reduction to 18 clubs. It damaged our chance of doing anything at World Cup level"
Graham Taylor

With the benefit of hindsight the FA underplayed their hand. The Premier League needed the FA's sanction, but the FA refused to insist the league cut down from 22 clubs to 18 (as proposed in the blueprint) to give England more preparation time and reduce the workload on players. It was a great missed opportunity.

Graham Taylor was manager of the England team at the time. He told *World Soccer:* "I fell out with my employers.

"They wanted me to welcome the formation of the new league and recommend it as being good for our national side, but I was bitterly disappointed that there would be no reduction to 18 clubs. That damaged our chance of doing anything at World Cup level. We play too much football, we do now and we did then, so we take tired players to tournaments."

Taylor added: "Commercially it has been very successful and it has improved pitches, facilities and the quality of play. Something did need to be done about the structure of the game but I thought then it was formed for reasons of finance and greed." He has been proved right.



Pushing the boundaries...Arsenal's Alex Song (centre) during a pre-season friendly against a Malaysian XI on his club's Far East tour

idea was swiftly withdrawn after a hostile response at home and overseas, but there was no shortage of countries interested in hosting a match.

However, this interest in the Premier League has damaged the domestic game in many of the countries in which it broadcasts. In several African countries, particularly English-speaking ones such as Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda and Zambia, fans are more interested in following the Premier League than local teams, even prompting fixture changes to avoid clashes with televised games. The sense of affiliation has reportedly reached such a degree in Nigeria that drivers will give way to cars indicating support for the same English team.

The late Olayiwola Olagbemiro, a former player, coach and administrator in Nigeria, said a few years ago: "Hardly can you get a soccer fan today who can name the line-up of any team in the Nigerian league, but you will see many who know the full squads of Arsenal, Manchester United, Chelsea, Liverpool."

In Singapore the allure is such that cable operator SingTel paid £200m (£40 for every head of population) for the 2010-13 TV rights. This tripled the previous figure paid by StarHub, who had increased the price of their sports package by 40 per cent after winning the contract.

The interest in Singapore, and some other parts of Asia, owes something to the local enthusiasm for gambling. With doubts about the honesty of many domestic league matches, English football, which is easy to view and regarded as clean from match fixing, is the gamblers' favourite.

Another consequence of English football's global appeal and financial rewards (both current and potential) is the growth in foreign ownership of Premier League clubs. The butchers, Old Etonians and pools promoters of old have all sold out to Americans, with Manchester United, Arsenal and Liverpool now among five clubs administered from across the Atlantic. Other owners last season hailed from India, Abu Dhabi, Russia, Bahamas, Hong Kong and Egypt.

Profit or glory

With the big English clubs now taken, and others looking overpriced, international investors are starting to look to other European leagues, hoping to replicate the Premier League experience – whether for profit or glory. American Thomas Di Benedetto has taken over Roma, Sheikh Abdullah has bought Malaga and Canada's Jack Kachkar has flirted with the acquisition of Marseille. It seems only the Bundesliga clubs, 51 per cent of whose ownership must remain in the hands of the membership, are off the table. Given that this year's Forbes' List of the "most valuable" 20 clubs included six apiece from England and Germany, (United were top, Real and Barca second and fifth respectively) that must frustrate would-be Bundesliga owners.

In the long term it is not clear what the internationalisation of the Premier ➤

How Europe's big leagues compare

Who's the daddy?

There is little doubt that the English Premier League is the most-watched league, reaching 650million homes worldwide last season. But is it the best?

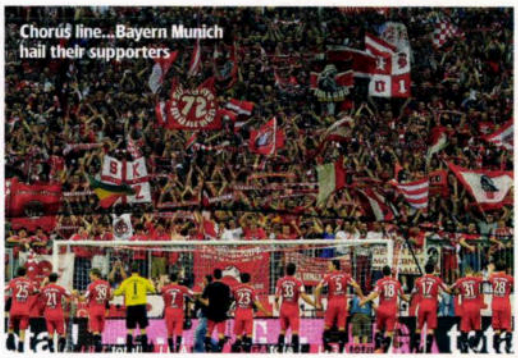
When the Premier League was formed, Serie A set the benchmark. It had the most glamorous players, the classiest football and, in the wake of the Italia 90 re-building, the shiniest stadia. Among the cognoscenti there was as much excitement in England that Channel Four was to broadcast Serie A matches – with the likes of Gascoigne and Gullit, Rijkaard and Van Basten – as there was about the new Premier League.

Twenty years on the debate is less clear-cut, though it is evident the best league is not the Italian, beset as it is by hooliganism and match-fixing scandals. The leading players are mainly in Spain, as well as the most stylish football. Kaka, Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi, the last three FIFA World Players of the Year, play there, as does Xavi, the current *World Soccer* Player of the Year. Spanish teams tend to combine the pace of English ones with the skill and tactical awareness of Italian ones.

However, the league is dominated by Barcelona and Real Madrid. Outside that pair, La Liga is uncompetitive – Real were 21 points clear of third-placed Valencia last season. Nevertheless, it has still been won by more clubs than the Premier League since the latter was formed. For competitiveness the place to go is France where, despite Lyon's seven-year run, nine different clubs have won the title in 19 years. This, though, is because successful clubs are destabilised as players leave France for higher wages (and often lower taxes) elsewhere.

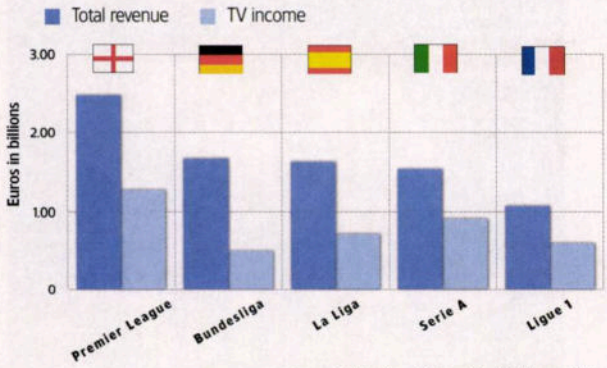
What of the Bundesliga? Many in England argue that it is the model to follow. It has the highest attendances in Europe, drawn by such aspects as safe standing, being allowed to drink alcohol while watching, a competitive league (a change of champion in nine of the last 10 seasons, with six clubs crowned) and attacking football often played at a fast pace. The national team continues to thrive and clubs must be 51 per cent owned by the community, so there are no capricious, unaccountable foreign owners.

However, no German club has won a European trophy since 2001. It seems no league is perfect, so determining the "best" depends on your criteria.


Chorus line...Bayern Munich hail their supporters

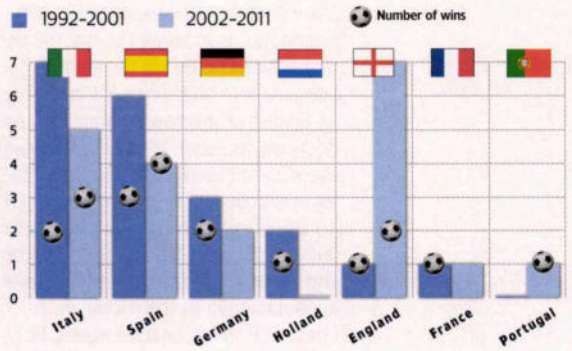
REVENUE 2009-10

Total income for clubs in Europe's top five leagues



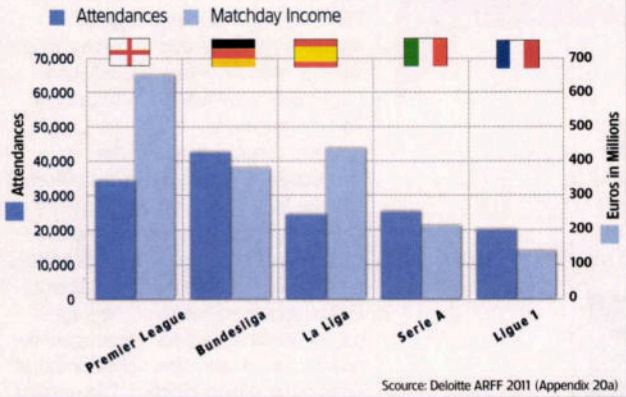
Scource: Deloitte Annual Review of Football Finance 2011 (p14)

EUROPEAN CUP/CHAMPIONS LGE FINAL APPEARANCES



ATTENDANCES VS MATCHDAY INCOME

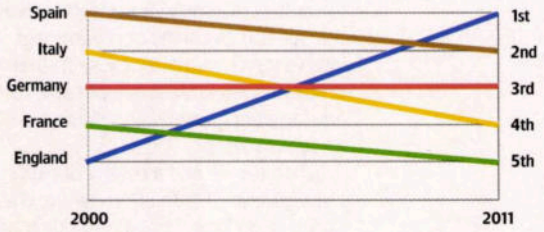
Supporters attending top-flight games, compared to how much they pay



Scource: Deloitte ARFF 2011 (Appendix 20a)

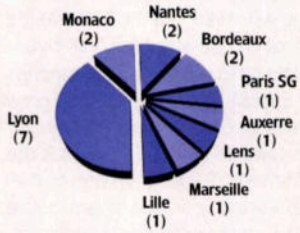
UEFA CO-EFFICIENT

The rise and fall of each country's co-efficient over the past 11 years



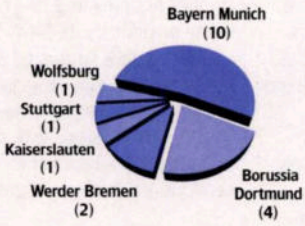
CHAMPIONS FROM SEASONS 1992-93 TO 2010-2011

The number of clubs that have won each country's top division in the past 19 seasons



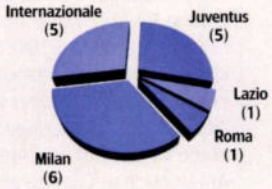
France (9)

(no title awarded for 1992-93 season)



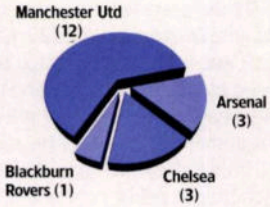
Germany (6)

Spain (5)



Italy (5)

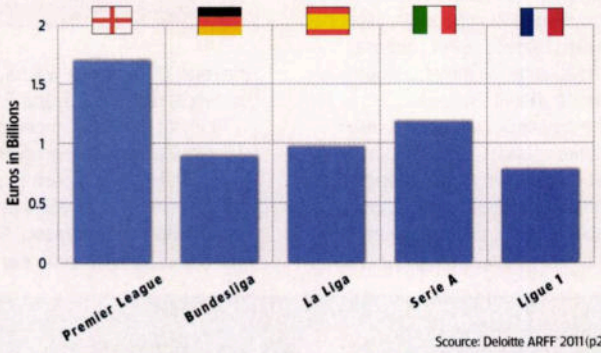
(no title awarded for 2004-05 season)



England (4)

WAGE COSTS 2009-10

Total wage bills of all the teams in each country's top division



Scource: Deloitte ARFF 2011 (p20)

NATIONAL TEAM ACHIEVEMENTS

World Cup and European Championships, 1992 to 2010 (10 tournaments)

	Winners	Runners-up	Semis	Last 8
France	2	1	1	2
Spain	2	0	0	4
Germany	1	3	2	2
Italy	1	2	0	2
England	0	0	1	4

Other European winners: Denmark, Greece, Holland
Other European Finalists: Czech Republic, Portugal

League will mean, but the fact that the organisation operates on a one-club, one-vote basis raises concern among some English supporters that the growth of American owners could prompt moves towards a closed shop, as is the case in most US sports. Whatever the future, a preponderance of non-native owners is unlikely to benefit England's national team, which is bitterly ironic as that was one of the fundamentals behind its formation.

When those foreign owners deign to drop by their investment they usually – the anti-Glazer protests apart – enjoy a far more pleasant match-day experience than was the case 20 years ago. Legislation, (the post-Hillsborough tragedy Taylor Report) and rising income, forced and enabled English clubs to make their stadiums the most comfortable in Europe. This has encouraged more females, more non-white faces and less spaces. In 1991-92 the average attendance in the old First Division was 21,622. Last season it was 35,400, an average only exceeded by the Bundesliga – and the Premier League, with its higher prices and eager merchandising, makes more money from those fewer fans. While the atmosphere can still be confrontational much of it is posturing; real hooliganism within grounds is all but eradicated while overt racism has gone. In that respect England, which encountered many of these problems first, presents a lead to many European countries. In this, and many other areas, the Premier League has been an influential voice in the Association of European Professional Football Leagues (EPFL), whose chairman is the Premier League's chairman, David Richards.

The audience is, however, also wealthier – and it has to be, for ticket prices have risen exponentially. Admission fees have long been an emotive subject. Even in the opening year of the Premier League, 61 British members of parliament signed an early day motion supporting the Stop Fleecing our Fans campaign and calling for clubs to "bring in realistic ticket prices". Then, a seat ticket to watch Manchester United from the side (the ends were still standing) cost £12-£14. Twenty years on that equates to £19, yet a seat in the same position costs £44-£55. These increases have squeezed many fans out of the market, especially young working-class men, formerly the bedrock of support. However, with seat occupancy exceeding 90 per cent for 14 successive seasons, price cuts are unlikely.

Mountains of debt

Ticket prices are one reason the British exchequer will take £1bn from football this season, but they have not prevented clubs developing mountains of debt. The Premier League's cumulative debt is around £2.5bn with annual losses running at around £500m. If the debt is partly due to the financing methods employed by the Glazers at Manchester United it is only sustained because of the largesse of men like Roman Abramovich at Chelsea and Sheikh Mansour at Manchester City.

Such investment, and the impact it has on Europe-wide competition, has been one of the main driving forces behind UEFA's introduction of Financial Fairplay (FFP) which will have ramifications well beyond England.

> MPs supported the Stop Fleecing Our Fans campaign and called for clubs to bring in realistic ticket prices

It is not just unbalanced competition Michel Platini, FFP's progenitor, wants to avoid. He is also keen to prevent clubs overreaching themselves as has become commonplace in England. Swansea City will this season become the 45th club to play in the Premier League, but if the wealth has been spread so has the debt. Since the formation of the Premier League there have been 54 instances of an English professional league club being declared insolvent. While all but one of these were Football League clubs (the exception being Portsmouth in 2010) 13 were former Premier League clubs (including Crystal Palace, Swindon Town and Bradford City twice). Others have been damaged by the trickle-down effect of Premier League wages, or by misjudged attempts to reach the riches of the top flight.

Promoted...Scott Sinclair celebrates his hat-trick as Swansea win the Championship play-off Final

For supporters of these clubs, the golden age has been that of Fool's Gold, the lustre stripped away by concern that their club would simply cease to exist. FFP may rein in some of English football's most masochistic excesses and slow, or even reverse, wage inflation. Chairmen all the way down to League Two are hoping so.

What, though, would be the consequence of clubs such as Chelsea and the Manchester rivals being financially outstripped by Barcelona and Real Madrid? It is likely their owners (most of whom have no great interest in the long-term health of the English game) would agitate for a less equitable distribution of television rights, one that aped the situation in Spain. The division of future income from web streaming and smart-phone content will also be drawn into the debate. The preference of many supporters would be to move towards the German model rather than the Spanish, but short of government intervention (which may cause further problems with FIFA) it is impossible to envisage the game being returned to its communities.

When the FA and a coterie of big clubs gave birth to the Premier League they changed the game worldwide – and the first 20 years are just the beginning of the process. WS

Transatlantic dynasty...Manchester United's American co-chairmen Avram Glazer (left) and his brother Joel

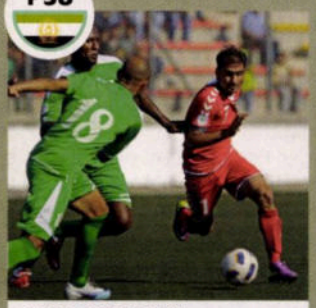
Dispatches

Exclusive reports from our worldwide network of correspondents

P36

TURKEY
Fenerbahce fans took to the streets after the arrest of club president Aziz Yildirim.

P38



AFGHANISTAN
They may be out of the World Cup, but Afghanistan are the most improved team of the year.

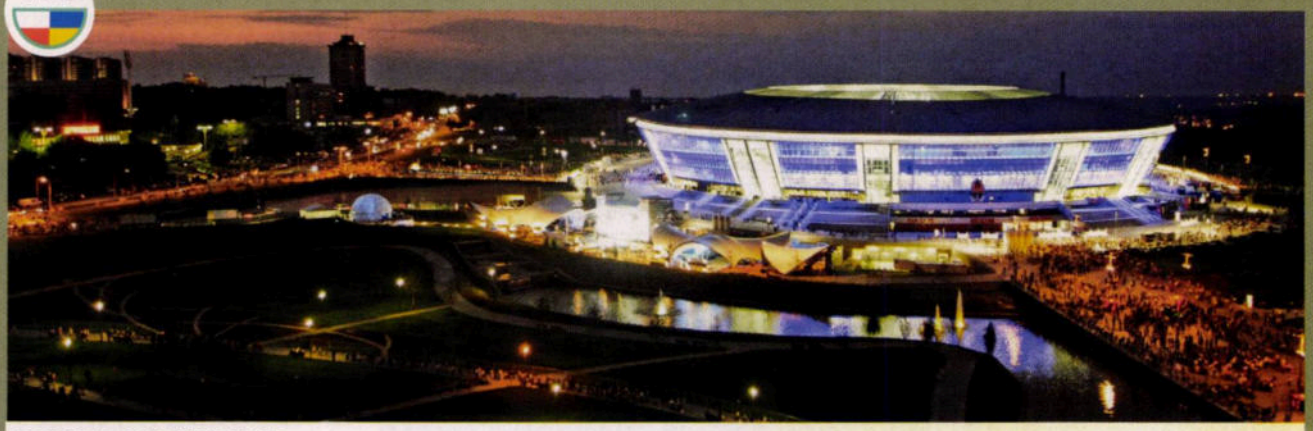
P40

ITALY
The Calciopoli scandal that denied Fabio Capello's Juventus the title has still not gone away.

P41

ISLE OF WIGHT
Fifteen teams got to grips with each other in the 14th Island Games' football tournament.

P42



POLAND AND UKRAINE
The Ukraine's Donbass Arena in Donetsk may be impressive, but both Euro 2012 hosts still have plenty to do before the competition kicks off next year.

MEHMET DEMIRCAN
in Istanbul

Aziz and co find themselves in a fix

Match-rigging scandal centres on Fener, Turkey's most powerful club

The police were surprised to see Fenerbahce president Aziz Yildirim dressed in a smart suit and shirt so early in the morning. It was 7am on a Sunday when Aziz became the first person arrested and taken in for questioning over a match-fixing scandal that has turned out to be the biggest in the history of Turkish football.

The story soon spread like wildfire across the media and the names of those detained for questioning began to emerge. Along with Aziz, they included Fenerbahce vice-president Sekip Mosturoglu, the club's former player Cemil Turan and new signings Emmanuel Emenike and Sezer Ozturk. Sivasspor president Mecnun Odyakmaz, Eskisehirspor coach Bulent Uygun and former international Umit Karan were also among the initial group of 26 people detained.

Another interesting name was that of Olgun Peker. An unlicensed agent with close links to Fenerbahce, he is a former president of second division Giresunspor. A police phone-tapping investigation of his links to organised crime is said to have triggered the current crisis.

As the police and courts began their investigations in earnest, the Turkish sports media began to voice their suspicions about possible fixed results.

Above all, attention centred on the final day of last season, when Fenerbahce beat Sivasspor 4-3 to claim the title on goal difference from Trabzonspor. This result capped a remarkable turnaround for Fenerbahce, who had seemed dead and buried at the halfway stage of the season but recovered to win an incredible 16 out of 17 games in the second half of the campaign.

The police, backed by video and photographic evidence, and with strong witnesses, claimed Aziz was the central figure, passing orders to his "generals" Sekip, Cemil and another Fenerbahce vice-president, Ilhan Eksioglu.

> Police claim Fenerbahce president Aziz Yildirim was the central figure, passing orders to his "generals" Sekip, Cemil and another Fener vice-president, Ilhan Eksioglu

It is alleged that significant sums of money were offered to rival teams, such as Eskisehirspor, to persuade them to perform well against Fener's closest rival Trabzonspor. It was not so much match fixing as match manipulation. After the first round of arrests and questioning, a number of people were released, but Aziz, Mecnun, Ilhan, Sekip, Bulent and Umit were detained and later charged, and remanded in custody pending trial.

Just when this was thought to be a case that centred solely on Fenerbahce, a second round of arrests took place.

Those detained this time included Istanbul BB players Ibrahim Akin and Iskender Alin, Trabzonspor president Sadri Sener, Besiktas coach Tayfur Havutcu and Besiktas director Serdal Adali. Tayfur and Serdal had been at a pre-season training camp in Austria and were ordered to fly straight home.

While the Trabzonspor contingent were released without charge, the others were not so lucky and it was alleged that Ibrahim Akın had been offered $100,000 by Fenerbahce to perform poorly against them.

The 27-year-old striker was also alleged to have been involved in fixing the Turkish Cup Final against Besiktas. It was claimed that Besiktas director Serdal offered him two racehorses as a gift and was recorded on the telephone telling him: "Don't play well against us, because we want to sign you to our team." Beskitas won 4-3 on penalties after a 2-2 draw.

As if to underline the seriousness of the situation, former FA president Mahmut Ozgener and former federation official Levent Kizil were also brought in for questioning, but were later released without charge.

Turkish FA chairman Mehmet Ali Aydinlar refused to take action against any of those involved, insisting that the legal process should take its course before any punishments are handed out. He insisted that the league should go ahead on August 6 and that Fenerbahce and Trabzonspor should represent Turkey in the Champions League.

However, matters are not expected to run that smoothly. Already, Besiktas have returned the Turkish Cup to the FA and have said they will refuse to play against Fenerbahce in the pre-season Super Cup.

The FA is coming under increasing pressure from the government to use the crisis to clean up Turkish football. It has the power to relegate clubs and ban them from European competition, although taking sanctions against Fenerbahce, the country's most powerful club, would provoke a storm of protest. **WS**

Questions to answer... Fenerbahce president Aziz is taken away by plain-clothes police

Protest march...Fenerbahce fans take to the streets following the detention of Aziz

Under suspicion

The key allegations in Turkey's biggest match-fixing scandal:

- Fenerbahce offered inducements to players from Eskisehirspor to perform well against rivals Trabzonspor.

- Fenerbahce offered an Istanbul BB player $100,000 to perform badly against them.

- Besiktas offered Istanbul BB's Ibrahim Akin two racehorses to encourage him to play poorly in the Turkish Cup Final.

In charge... Cuneyt

- Fenerbahce put pressure on the federation to appoint Cuneyt Cakir as referee of their Istanbul derby game against Besiktas. Aziz got his way, Cuneyt took charge and Fener won 4-2.

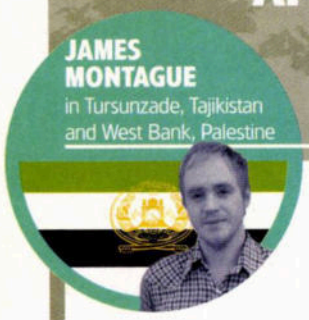
- Fenerbahce officials offered incentives to Konyaspor players, via coach Yilmaz Vural, ahead of their league game on March 20 which Fenerbahce won 2-0.

- Fenerbahce offered incentives to Bucaspor players, via former player Cemil Turan, urging them to go easy so that relegation rivals Sivasspor would be in a comfortable position before the final game of the season, which was against Fenerbahce.

- Cemil Turan offered a $300,000 incentive to Ankaragucu players before a match on May 15 in which Fenerbahce thrashed them 6-0.

Goal...Korcan

- A Fenerbahce vice-president offered an inducement to Sivasspor goalkeeper Korcan Celikay to let in a goal on the final day of the season against Fener. Korcan conceded a suspicious goal and Fener won 4-3 to take the league title.



JAMES MONTAGUE
in Tursunzade, Tajikistan and West Bank, Palestine

Knocked out but not down

Afghanistan's World Cup ended almost as soon as it began

Team-e Melli's players lay exhausted on the pitch in the baking, early evening sun at the Faisal Al Husseini stadium near Ramallah after drawing 1-1 with Palestine. It was the first time the Afghans had ever drawn a game in any World Cup match, but the exertion had taken its toll.

Two players had collapsed and had to be taken to hospital. In the dressing room central defender Djelaludin Sharityar points to the floor. "Look at my ankles," he instructs wearily, complaining about the three flights the team had to take from Kabul to Dubai, to Delhi, to Amman. "All the blood has gone to my ankles."

The draw, but ultimate elimination from the 2014 World Cup qualifiers, marked the end of an exhausting two weeks for two international teams on the edge of the world game. The first leg, which Palestine won 2-0, had to be played in neighbouring Tajikistan, such is the security situation in Kabul, and the second leg was played in the West Bank just five days later. The Afghans had arrived overland, through the Israeli border, just 24 hours before the very first World Cup match to take place on Palestinian soil kicked off. They didn't even have the chance to train together after the first leg. The Afghan government did their best to scupper the return leg too, putting pressure on their football federation to refuse to play the match.

"It was clear that their players and officials would not be allowed by the Afghan government to come because they didn't want their passports stamped with the Israeli [border] stamps," explained Jerome Champagne, a former special advisor to Sepp Blatter who now works as a consultant for the Palestinian Football Association. The Afghan government doesn't recognise Israel. But FIFA intervened and the Afghan authorities eventually relented.

The records will show that Afghanistan lost 3-1 on aggregate, yet the two games marked a huge progression for football in Afghanistan, and point the way to a blueprint that other war-torn countries can follow to rebuild the game from the ashes of conflict.

Ever since the Soviet Union rolled its tanks into Afghanistan in 1979, the country has been destroyed by successive invasions and civil conflicts. For 19 years, between a 6-0 hammering by Jordan in 1984 and a narrow 1-0 defeat to Sri Lanka in 2003, Afghanistan didn't play a single official international match. When the Taliban took control in 1996, football was seen as a corrupting Western concept. During this time, Kabul's Ghazi Stadium was put to more practical use by the Taliban: the centre circle was where they held public executions every Friday.

Upsurge in fortunes

An additional problem was the fact that players on international duty would frequently disappear and try to claim asylum – as nine players did in 2004 before taking part in a charity match in Italy. But this year has marked an upsurge in fortunes for Afghani football. The country now has a professional league that operates around the relative calm of Kabul.

"When the Taliban came to Kabul I was eight years old. I found a bomb. It was difficult for me, but I became national captain so it hasn't affected me," says the team's 23-year-old skipper Israfeel Kohistani, who plays for Kabul Bank, explaining how he came to have no fingers on his left hand. "People don't think about football like they used to. They are always thinking about fighting, fighting.

"We have difficulties with our government, they don't give us any money. But we have a professional league now and there are only problems in the provinces. Kabul is calm."

But the big change in fortune has come on the international stage. This year the

Point taken...Afghanistan players reflect on their draw in Palestine

Making progress...Kohistani (right) runs at Palestine in the second leg

Afghans rose to 164th in FIFA's rankings, making them the most improved international team of 2011.

The rise has come largely thanks to the influx of professional players from the Afghan diaspora around the world, some of whom had never been to Afghanistan before being called up.

"I went to Kabul for the first time ever [after the first leg in Tajikistan], it was so exciting. You know, my family are from Kandahar and didn't want me to enter Afghanistan. They agreed in the end," explained Mohammed Yusef Mashriqi, a goalscoring midfielder with New York Cosmos. Born and raised in the USA, and the son of former Afghanistan international Tahir Mashriqi, Mohammed used to play for the US national junior team. When the opportunity came to play for Afghanistan he jumped at the chance, explaining: "My father was a member of the Afghan national team, that's why it's even more exciting...I'm filling my father's shoes. I just wish we could play against the States in four or five years."

But the reality of playing at the bottom rung of international football soon became apparent to the 24-year-old.

> "When the Taliban came to Kabul I was eight years old. I found a bomb"
> **Afghanistan captain Israfeel Kohistani explains how he came to have no fingers on his left hand**

"There were many problems'" he added. "The federation had problems. I heard we had problems with the diplomatic and political situation. They didn't want our visas stamped. Going into Palestine is exciting, it was exciting going to Kabul. They are both countries that have gone through a lot over the past few years."

Language problems

Nine players who were called up for the two games against Palestine play their club football in Germany, USA, Norway and, like defender Sharityar, in Cyprus.

"We have 32 languages [in Afghanistan], but two main languages, Pashtu and Dari. I only understand Pashtu," said Sharityar, who explained others in the squad only speak Dari, a Persian language almost identical to Farsi. "Sometimes it is a problem in the game to explain something.

"We have players who speak Farsi and German and English, but we find a way to explain to everyone what they want.

"The first game it was a big problem. I went for the ball and shouted: 'My ball!' [The other centre-back] didn't understand so we both went for it. Now I know some Farsi words to tell him."

This year Afghanistan beat Bhutan twice as well as Sri Lanka in the qualifiers for the 2012 AFC Challenge Cup. And although defeat to Palestine was difficult to take, the message that the team sends out to a country still at war is undeniable: tribal, political and linguistic differences can be put behind them.

"I learnt a lot about my country through the national team," said Sharityar, who fled with his family when he was seven and settled in Germany. It was the first time he had returned home in two decades.

"After 21 years it gives me another chance to see my country. It gives me a chance to see people from other cities, which I don't normally see. We want to show the country that it is possible to live with each other." WS

ITALY

PADDY AGNEW
in Rome

Calciopoli: the never-ending story

Inter stand accused of influencing refs as 2006 scandal is reopened

Remember the Calciopoli match-fixing scandal in 2006, the year of Italy's World Cup win in Germany? Well it's not over yet. After a showcase Italian Football Federation trial that summer, Juventus were severely punished, being relegated to Serie B and stripped of their 2004-05 and 2005-06 titles, with the latter being awarded to Internazionale.

Furthermore, for their key involvement, Juve's controversial director general Luciano Moggi, the club's CEO Antonio Giraudo and federation deputy president Innocenzo Mazzini all received five-year bans. This June, at the end of those five years, the federation issued lifetime bans to all three.

However, the matter is still not over and done with. Calciopoli has been followed by Calciopoli II, the still-ongoing state judicial investigation, based in Naples, in which the state prosecutors have called for a five-years-and-eight-months sentence to be handed down to Moggi, who is accused of corruption, with the court's verdict due sometime this winter.

The problem is, that in the course of Calciopoli II, various new wire-taps have been produced by the defence which would suggest that this was a case of "they were all at it". In particular, Juventus argue that phone calls made by Giacinto Facchetti, the late Inter director and one-time defender, to referee nominator Paolo Bergamo suggest the *Nerazzurri* may also have a dirty bib.

Called to rule on the matter, the federation's senior prosecutor, Stefano Palazzi, concluded in early July that Inter had indeed been guilty of "an illicit act" in 2006 in that they had tried to "gain an advantage for themselves...by conditioning the correct functioning of referees".

Palazzi, however, ruled that no sanctions could be applied to Inter since the Statute of Limitations applied – meaning too much time has passed since the alleged offence.

In the meantime, Juventus had asked that the 2006 title be given back to them, pointing to the new wire-tap revelations as proof that Inter were also involved in questionable practices. In the end, in a mid-July ruling worthy of Pontius Pilate himself, the federation ruled it was "not competent" to revoke the title, leaving it with Inter. A furious Juve seem determined to follow this one through, travelling via the High Court of Italy's national Olympic committee, UEFA and then the Court for Sports Arbitration in Lausanne. After that, they could even consider appeals made through the state judicial system, all the way up to the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg.

Juve argue that phone calls made to the referee nominator suggest Inter may also have a dirty bib

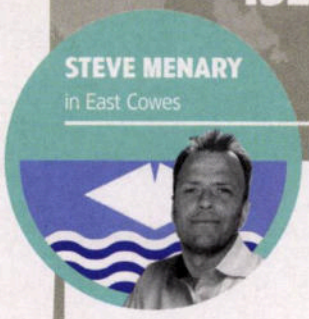
Truly, this one will almost certainly continue to run and run. **WS**

Enjoy it while it lasts...coach Fabio Capello enjoys Juventus' Serie A title triumph in 2006

NEXT MONTH

- Club focus on Paris Saint-Germain
- More European league previews
- Under-20 World Cup reviewed

STEVE MENARY
in East Cowes



Island hoppers victorious

The hosts triumphed in the latest edition of the Island Games

Having recently beaten the Faroe Islands 3-0, Gibraltar coach Allen Bula – who is also the development manager of Slovakian side Kosice – did not expect to see his side trailing by the same score to the Isle of Wight.

However, that is the nature of the biennial Island Games' football tournament, the only regular competitive outing for teams such as Gibraltar, Greenland and the Falklands, who are stuck outside FIFA for political reasons.

It may have been a weakened Faroes XI that lost to Gibraltar, but the result was a major boost for the 2007 Island Games winners and they had only needed a draw with this year's hosts to seal a place in the Games semi-finals.

Gibraltar had scored 12 goals in opening wins over Alderney and Yns Mon, but they met their match against the Isle of Wight. Although they came back strongly with goals from Yogan Santos and Joseph Chipolina, Lee Casciaro missed a chance to take the game to extra time and the Isle of Wight won 3-2, leaving Bula to look forward to a forthcoming friendly with Rochdale.

The Falklands, who have won only two matches at this level, struggled just to reach the Isle of Wight due to flights from the South Atlantic being disrupted. Football in the Falklands is being hit by interest generated in the islanders' cricket side securing associate status with the International Cricket Council, and they lost 5-0 to Guernsey, 6-0 to the Isle of Man and 6-1 to the Swedish island of Gotland in their group matches, although they did beat Alderney 3-0 in a classification game.

Greenland traditionally fare better without coming close to the title. Edged out 2-1 by Rhodes in their first group game, they needed to beat Menorca.

They made a bad start when veteran John Kreutzmann, who has played in a variety of roles but now keeps goal, was beaten after six minutes by David Mas. Pavia Molgard of B67 equalised, Mas scored again but G44's John Broberg levelled. Pouring forward for a winner, Greenland were exposed at the back and Mercaval striker Mas tapped in for his hat-trick and a 3-2 win.

Rhodes were kicked out after a rash of red cards against Jersey in the day's other group game and Greenland could have progressed by beating holders Jersey but went down 2-1.

Many professional players missed out on the tournament because of club commitments or the need for insurance. Thus Gibraltar called up Chipolina and Liam Walker from Spanish side Balompedica but could not field Middlesbrough's Anthony Hernandez, while Bristol City's Brett Pittman and fellow Jersey-man Michael Weir, who spent last season in Portugal with Associao Desportive da Camacha, was also unable to travel.

The Isle of Wight side of island players with a sprinkling of semi-professionals provided a big draw on an island where a big club match barely attracts 150 spectators. Around 900 watched their game against Gibraltar, while nearly 2,000 crammed into Newport's St George's Park for the Final, against Guernsey, to witness the island's biggest match in years.

> Falklands football has been hit by interest in the cricket side, who now have ICC associate status

The Channel Islanders, who have entered the Football League pyramid this season, included ex-professionals Ryan Zico-Black and Chris Tardiff in their side, but the hosts won their second Island Games' title, triumphing 4-2 after extra-time. **WS**

Hands on...Greenland's Norsaq Lund Mathaeussen (in red) tangles with Menorca goalkeeper Josep Pons

GAVIN HAMILTON
in Kiev & Warsaw

Two countries, one giant building site

With 12 months to go before Euro 2012, there is still much to do

"There's still time" is the mantra recited by almost everyone connected with preparations for Euro 2012. With one year to go, stadiums may still resemble building sites, roads remain unbuilt and airport extensions are incomplete, but, somehow, some way, everything will be alright on the night.

"The road has not always been easy to ride," said UEFA general secretary Gianni Infantino during a tour of the eight host cities in June. "The project was a high risk 18 months ago with some delays in development. There have been some hiccups along the way, and I lost a few hairs worrying about preparations, but our doubts have been wiped out."

The 2007 decision to award the tournament hosting rights to Poland and Ukraine was controversial, but seen as payback for the east European support given to Michel Platini in his successful campaign to oust Lennart Johansson as UEFA president.

Euro 2012 is UEFA's first venture into eastern Europe for a major tournament. What was already a major organisational headache was exacerbated by the global recession in 2008, when Ukraine turned to the International Monetary Fund for help and many public sector projects were jettisoned.

In April 2010, Platini gave Ukraine a final ultimatum – a "yellow card" in his own footballspeak – and warned that any further delays in the construction of the Kiev stadium, the proposed venue for the Euro 2012 Final, would result in Ukraine being stripped of its host status.

Now, with a year to go, UEFA officials are more relaxed about preparations. "It may be that some stadiums open their doors a few weeks late, but we are honestly not worried," says Infantino.

It's been a steep learning curve for UEFA, who have quickly had to work out how to deal with the eastern european mindset. "In Switzerland we like to get on with things," admits one UEFA official. "Here, they like to sit down with a drink and get to know you over the course of an evening before they do business with you."

ExCo member Frantisek Laurinec, from neighbouring Slovakia, concurs: "The east European mentality is very different to western Europe, to the Germans and the Swiss. They need to be given deadlines."

Deadlines are most pressing in Lviv and Kiev, where the stadiums are behind schedule. Lviv's was due to open with a friendly against Austria on November 15, but that deadline is unlikely to be met, with less than 50 per cent of the build complete. The stadium in Kiev is still little more than a building site, although local officials claim that the build is 87 per cent complete. More than 2,000 construction workers are employed and the original cost has tripled to more than £300m. UEFA officials privately concede that the proposed opening match, a friendly against Germany in November, may have to be moved to another venue.

There have also been allegations of corruption. In Donetsk, the local mayor, Alexander Lukyanchenko, came under fire when accounts revealed that £330,000 had been spent on 10 portable toilets for the city's fanzone. "You have to pay for comfort," Lukyanchenko weakly explained. In Kharkiv, mayor Gennady Kernes spent £52,500 on 10 benches in the new Alexeyevskaya subway station, although a town hall spokesman, when questioned by journalists, claimed "all these benches are works of art"!

At least Donetsk and Kharkiv are well advanced in their preparations, thanks to the intervention of local oligarchs.

Ukraine's richest man, Rinat Akhmetov, the owner of Shakhtar Donetsk, has invested heavily in his club's impressive Donbass Arena – a 51,500-capacity stadium which will host a Euro 2012 semi-final – as well as a training base with facilities to put most of those used by western European clubs to shame.

In Kharkiv, local billionaire Alexandre Yaroslavsky has put $265million into a stadium (used by his team, Metalist), a training complex, a headquarters for UEFA and a new airport for the city.

"We have made great progress, look at Kharkiv, and look at Metalist," Yaroslavsky said, as he showed journalists around the city. "One year ago this was empty land. Five years ago, Metalist was in the second division, now we are ready to challenge the top clubs of Europe."

Work to do...the venue for the finale of Euro 2012, 14 months before the Final

The downside of holding a tournament in industrial cities such as Donetsk and Kharkiv is that hotel accommodation is severely limited. In Donetsk, where there are currently only 650 hotel beds, journalists were taken to a field on the outskirts of the city where organisers hope visiting fans will rent tents at a makeshift campsite. There are also plans for universities' summer 2012 term to end prematurely in order to free up rooms in college dormitories.

Building site

Meanwhile, in Poland, the problems lie not with the stadiums, which are either ready or close to completion, but with the transport infrastructure.

Warsaw's stadium, almost complete, will gain many plaudits, while in Gdansk, the new PGE Arena is an architectural

WHAT THE PAPERS SAY...

Ukraine's *Today* newspaper led with the headline "One year to go until Euro 2012. There's still time" above a picture of the half-built stadium in Lviv.

> "I am shocked by our hooligan fans...and I can only apologise"
> **Polish FA president Grzegorsz Lato**

triumph, a 40,000-capacity stadium finished with a yellow plastic coating designed to replicate amber, the resin that is mined from the local Baltic coastline. But there are serious doubts as to whether the road linking Gdansk airport to the city centre will be ready on time.

The Polish government had hoped that a proposed motorway, linking Gdansk in the north with the Polish-Czech border in the south, would be completed in time. That ambition has been shelved, but UEFA's Infantino puts a brave face on the setback, suggesting: "Poland is already connected with the rest of Europe."

A recent report by the Polish Supreme Audit Office (NIK) criticised the lack of progress in preparing the country's transport infrastructure in time for the Euros, claiming: "Euro 2012 preparations have visibly advanced. But the scale of delays, abandoned projects and poorly implemented investments is so significant that it may threaten the smooth running of the tournament.

"NIK states that modernising the road infrastructure has suffered the most serious negligence."

Hooliganism is another headache after the recent trouble at the Polish Cup Final. There is particular concern that, should Germany, Russia and England qualify for the finals, far-right groups may use the former Nazi concentration camps in Poland as potential rallying points.

Grzegorsz Lato, the former World Cup star who is now Poland's FA president, was brutally honest about the problem, admitting: "I am shocked by our hooligan fans. In my career as a footballer I never experienced anything like that. I can only apologise."

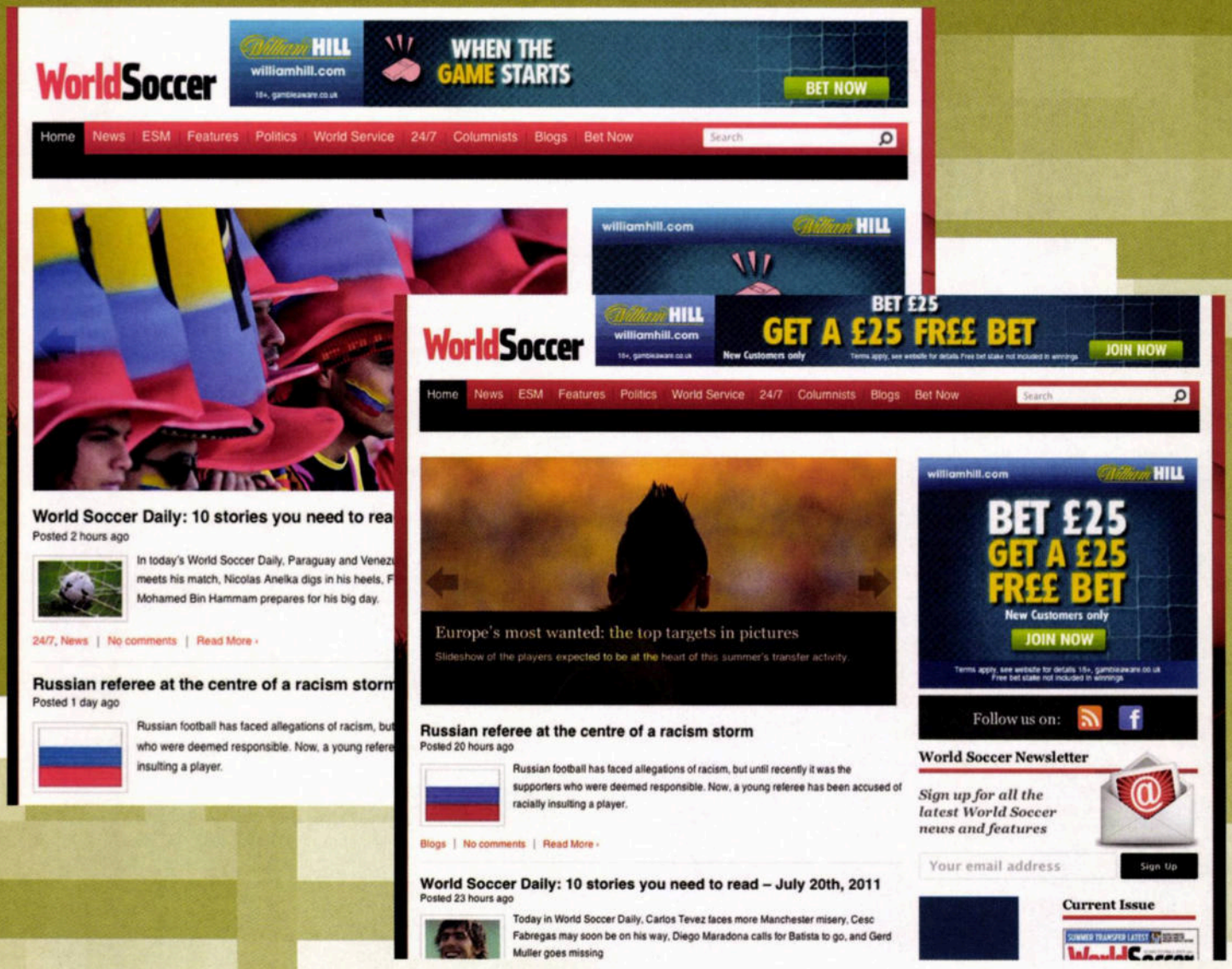
Brand new...the PGE Arena in Gdansk

Infantino added that UEFA is monitoring the situation carefully. "The eyes of the world will be on Poland," he says. "It's an issue we are treating very seriously and we have to tackle it."

The sheer size of both countries will make travel between the venues problematic, even if airport and road improvements are completed on time. But for those fans who stay close to the historic centres of Gdansk, Wroclaw and Poznan in Poland, and Lviv in Ukraine, an enjoyable time is envisaged.

"It may be that one road is not fully repaired or that one star is missing somewhere on a hotel," explains a confident Infantino. "But I am sure that this will be compensated by the hospitality people receive." **WS**

www.worldsoccer.com



New look! New features! New writers!

Packed with original content and some of the best blogs on the web

760 Players profiled **38** Champions League teams in detail **18** Major leagues previewed

The ultimate guide to the new season in Europe

World Soccer's guide to the 2011-12 campaign features 18 of Europe's top domestic leagues and includes an in-depth look at the teams who are guaranteed to be in the Champions League from the third qualifying round onwards (except for Turkey's Fenerbahce and Trabzonspor, whose participation was still to be confirmed).

Compiled by Nick Bidwell and Gavin Hamilton, with contributions from Paddy Agnew (Italy), Sam Beckwith (Czech Republic), Dan Brennan (Scotland), Klaas-Jan Droppert (Holland), Lou Economopoulos (Greece), Victor Gusev (Russia), Jim Holden (Denmark), Brian Homewood (Austria, Switzerland), Howard Johnson (France), Dariusz Kurowski (Poland), Sid Lowe (Spain), Vladimir Novak (Serbia), Pedro Pinto (Portugal), Radu Timofte (Romania), Oleg Zadernovsky (Ukraine)

KICK OFF!

AUSTRIA

Salzburg aiming to take back title from Sturm

Top two...Salzburg's Christoph Leitgeb tackles Imre Szabics of Sturm Graz

Key dates

Season starts
July 16, 2011
Winter break
December 17, 2011
to February 9, 2012
Season ends
May 16, 2012

Austrian football has been so littered with takeovers and mergers over the years that it can sometimes be hard to tell who is who. Even the name of the championship, the Bundesliga, inevitably leads to confusion.

Apart from the name, however, the Austrian league has little in common with its more glamorous counterpart. Germany's packed stadiums are a far cry from Austria's empty terraces where the average attendance last season was 7,858 – although at least that's an improvement on 1992-93, when the figure dipped below 3,000.

The format, with the 10 teams playing each other four times, does not really help a sport which struggles to compete with downhill skiing for attention. Like in Switzerland, the Austrian season seems interminable, starting in mid-July, finishing at the end of the following May and featuring a long winter break.

Austria also appears to be behind most of Europe in dealing with hooliganism, the worst incident being the pitch invasion in May which forced a Rapid-Austria Vienna derby to be abandoned during the first half.

Salzburg have dominated the Austrian game since they were taken over and "rebranded" by the Red Bull drinks company, while the Magna group have also been heavily involved, sponsoring Austria Vienna until 2005 and then Wiener Neustadt.

This season, Magna, founded by Austrian-Canadian billionaire Franck Stronach, will be lending their weight to defending champions **Sturm Graz**. Stronach helped out last season by paying the wages of several young players as Sturm, coached by German Franco Foda, won their first championship for 12 years.

But while Sturm are the holders, **Salzburg** remain the title favourites. They have won the league three times in five seasons since the Red Bull takeover, although they have yet to make it into the Champions League group stages. Red Bull's policies – including changing the club colours – have alienated supporters so much that a group have formed a new team with the club's original name, Austria Salzburg. Unusually for Austria, the top-flight Salzburg squad has a multi-national flavour, with players from Argentina, Brazil, Croatia, Finland, Sweden, Uganda and Uruguay.

The two big Vienna teams, Rapid and Austria, will be trying to emerge from the doldrums – but without the aid of big sponsors.

Rapid Vienna, in particular, are working hard to develop their own talent. Traditionally seen as Vienna's working-class team, they remain the country's most popular club, with average attendances of over 15,000. They have also won a record 32 league titles, although only two of those have been in the last decade.

Peter Schottel has taken over as coach to replace Peter Pacult, who was sacked last term after he was seen talking to Red Bull boss Dietrich Mateschitz at a Vienna restaurant. Most of the squad is Austrian but the key players are foreign: Albanian striker Hamdi Salihi and German playmaker Steffen Hofmann.

Austria Vienna, looked upon by their rivals as a "bourgeois" outfit, have had to adjust to a much smaller budget since Magna departed in the 2005-06 season – and they have not won the title since.

They finished third last season but had two of the league's top players in midfield star Zlatko Junuzovic and striker Roland Linz.

Wiener Neustadt, from a small town just south of Vienna, have been forced to halve their budget following the departure of Magna, but Stronach will continue to sponsor some of their younger players. The club has only existed since 2008 when FC Magna merged with the old Wiener Neustadt. Magna itself had replaced Schwanenstadt in the second division after the club lost its licence.

Ried, sometimes called SV Josko Ried after their sponsors, won the Austrian Cup for the second time last season and finished fourth in the league, ahead of Rapid Vienna.

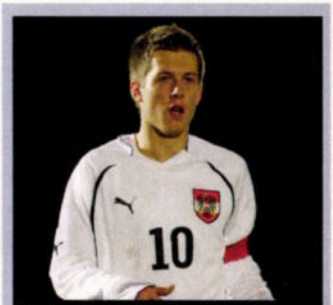
Tyrol's representatives are **Wacker Innsbruck**, a club which has also been known as Swarovski Tirol and FC Tirol. They performed respectably last season after winning promotion, eventually finishing sixth.

Franz Lederer will begin his eighth season in charge of **Mattersburg**, although he might have to do better than last season's ninth place to keep his job. Curiously, Mattersburg's average home gate of 5,448 last season was not much smaller than the town's population of 6,300.

Kapfenberg – who appear on the Bundesliga's website as KSV Superfund – have twice finished eighth since returning to the top flight in 2008 after a 41-year absence. They ended last season as the worst supported team with an average home gate of 3,049.

Admira Wacker Modling, to give them their full name, were promoted last season and will be playing in the top flight for the first time in their current incarnation following a series of mergers.

Brian Homewood


Boyhood ambition...Rapid fan Alar

SIGNING OF THE SUMMER
DENI ALAR (Rapid Vienna)
The Kapfenberger striker scored 14 goals in the Austrian Bundesliga last term, earning himself a move to the club he supported as a boy. Of Croatian descent, he has been capped by Austria at Under-21 level.

Coming and goings...but Anderlecht are still top heavy

Warming up...Anderlecht newcomer Safari holds off Benfica's Oscar Cardozo in a pre-season friendly

Key dates

Season starts
July 29, 2011
Season ends
May 2012

What with rival football broadcasters Belgacom and Voo engaged in a no-holds-barred advertising war, wave upon wave of bitter recriminations after the relegation of Charleroi – whose rent-a-quote president Abbas Bayat never goes quietly – and a metaphoric tornado visiting Standard Liege, the close season in Belgium could not have been more explosive.

Runners-up last season, **Standard Liege** were not only the subject of a takeover but also had to contend with a close encounter with the judiciary and rumours that their famous old Sclessin ground was about to be sold.

Standard's new owner, businessman, politician and former Sint-Truiden president Roland Duchatelet - who bought the club from Marseille proprietor Margarita Louis-Dreyfus for a cool £36million - certainly has his hands full, with state prosecutors investigating ex-club vice-president Luciano D'Onofrio over money laundering allegations and the last three chief executives for fraud.

While Standard and champions **Genk** have been struggling to hold on to their best players, **Anderlecht** have been busy fortifying their ranks, bringing in Sweden wing-back Behrang Safari on a free from Basle, Ghanaian full-back Denis Odoi from Sint-Truiden, Brazilian full-back Diogo on loan from Sao Paulo and Venezuelan attacking midfielder Ronald Vargas who, after spectacularly falling out with Club Brugge, cleverly engineered a £2.2m switch to the Parc Astrid.

Still recovering from the serious knee injury he suffered earlier this year, Vargas is said to be a risky acquisition, but Anderlecht don't see it that way. Mindful Club Brugge were demanding £4.5m for "*La Perla*" a few days before sealing the deal, they are convinced they have made a coup.

Anderlecht do have their problems though. Swedish/Uruguayan midfielder Guillermo Molins, recruited from Malmo, severely damaged knee ligaments in his first pre-season outing, while the January sale of creative inspiration Mbark Boussoufa to Russian side Anzhi Makhachkala has left a huge void on the left of attack and, until August 31, no one can be sure that striking starlet Romelu Lukaku will not respond to the big league sirens. The squad is still too large and unwieldy, making it nigh impossible for coach Ariel Jacobs to keep everyone happy.

Club Brugge fans were dismayed to see both Vargas and outstanding Croat midfielder Ivan Perisic - who joined German champions Borussia Dortmund - disappear over the horizon; after all, the pair accounted for almost three-quarters of the club's goals last season. But the *Blauw en Zwart* (blue and blacks) have made a concerted effort to plug the gaps, paying £2.9m for NEC Nijmegen's Bjorn Vleminckx - leading scorer in the Eredivisie last term - Maccabi Haifa midfielder Lior Rafaelov and Niki Zimling, a young Danish playmaker from Udinese.

Europe the target...Sollied is back for a third spell in charge of Gent

General manager Sven Vermant feels a top-three place is a realistic aim and the fans tend to agree, with season ticket sales up 10 per cent.

Norwegian Trond Sollied, in his third spell as **Gent** head coach, has set European qualification as the minimum requirement and, given the talent in the Buffalos squad, it should be perfectly feasible, particularly after the addition of Burundi defender Valery Nahayo for £1m from South Africa's Kaizer Chiefs.

Other clubs looking to make the championship play-offs next spring are **Mechelen**, **Zulte-Waregem** – where coach Hugo Broos has been replaced by Swiss-Bosnian Darije Kalezic, who landed Inter Zapresic's £1m Macedonian forward Aleksandar Trajkovski – and **Lokeren**, who have an imposing new striker in Tunisian Hamdi Harbaoui (ex-OH Leuven).

For all coach Bob Peeters' leadership and tactical flair, **Cercle Brugge** could struggle now on-loan leading scorer Reynaldo has returned to Anderlecht. **Westerlo**, a form side in the second half of last season, have lost Brazilian top scorer Paulo Henrique to Trabzonspor, and coach Jan Ceulemans will have his work cut out.

Beerschot, who recently changed their name from Germinal Beerschot to Beerschot Antwerp, hope new South Africans Sive Phekezela, a right-back, and midfielder Lindani Ntamo will help them crack the top 10. **Kortrijk** look at least mid-table finishers, though they will miss playmaker Sven Kums, who has opted for Heerenveen in Holland.

Sint-Truiden, the only Belgian club to have an artificial pitch, could be on a slippery slope, particularly as keeper Mark Volders is out for most of this year with a complicated groin problem. The outlook for new coach Chris Janssens is not the brightest.

Coming up are **OH Leuven**, who were last in the top flight in 1950, and **Mons**, the Wallon club led so impressively by coach Dennis van Wijk.

Nick Bidwell

Seeking home goals...Vleminckx

SIGNING OF THE SUMMER
BJORN VLEMINCKX (Club Brugge)
Twenty-five-year-old Belgian striker is back in his homeland after two years with NEC in Holland, where he scored 31 goals in 63 Eredivisie games and was the league's top scorer last term.

BELGIUM

Genk

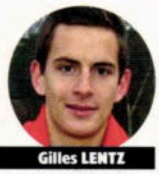
THE COACH

Franky VERCAUTEREN
Age 54 (28.10.56)
Midfield star of the 1980s who has developed into a fine coach, taking just 18 months to build a title-winning side.

(All ages as of 01.08.11)

GOALKEEPERS

Laszlo KOTELES (Hun)
Age 26 (01.09.84)
Larger-than-life reserve who can play to the gallery. Signed from Diosgyor in 2009.



Gilles LENTZ
Age 19 (01.02.92)
Belgium junior international who joined from Standard Liege in 2009.

Provincial overachievers doing it on the cheap

Ready to host Europe's finest ...Genk's Fenix Stadium

Symbolised by down-to-earth president Herbert Houben, who says "even Guardiola wouldn't be guaranteed of winning here", Genk – whose previous national league titles were in 1999 and 2002 - make a point of living within their means.

Their current budget runs to no more than £23million and they are never happier than when playing the part of provincial overachievers, content to give big boys Anderlecht, Standard Liege and Club Brugge a run for their money from time to time. But they have experienced a surge under Vercauteren, who replaced Hein Vanhaezebrouck in December 2009 and took them into the Europa League in his first season. Last term was the stuff of dreams...

DEFENDERS

ANELE Ngcongca (SAf)
Age 23 (21.01.87)
International right-back bought from Western Province United in 2007.

Timothy DURWAEL
Age 20 (24.02.91)
Right-back who came up through the Genk youth ranks. Capped by Belgium at Under-19 level.

Torben JONELEIT (Ger)
Age 24 (17.05.87)
Solid centre-back who helped Genk win the 2010-11 league title on his birthday.

Daniel PUDIL (CzR)
Age 25 (27.09.85)
International left-sided player with a hint of devilment in his character. Joined from Slovan Liberec three years ago.

Anthony VANDEN BORRE
Age 23 (24.10.87)
Right-back or winger, back in Belgium after spells abroad with Fiorentina, Genoa and Portsmouth.

TACTICS

Vercauteren swears by a direct attacking style, with lateral passing kept to a minimum. The two men they cannot do without are left-flank creator De Bruyne and indomitable central striker Vossen – who provides strength on the ball, goalscoring nous and a huge appetite for closing down opponents.

4-4-2

MIDFIELDERS

Thomas BUFFEL
Age 30 (19.02.81)
Attacking midfielder or striker who played for Feyenoord, Excelsior, Rangers and Cercle Brugge before decamping to Genk two years ago.

Fabien CAMUS (Tun)
Age 26 (28.02.85)
Gutsy and disciplined French-Tunisian, who was on the books of Montpellier and Marseille.

Kevin DE BRUYNE
Age 20 (28.06.91)
More technical pizzaz, liveliness and creative instincts than most. More importantly, has no delusions of grandeur. Linked with Chelsea.

David HUBERT
Age 23 (12.02.88)
Trusty defensive midfielder and club captain whose main asset is his excellent reading of the game.

Dugary NDABASHINZE (Brd)
Age 21 (08.10.89)
Right-sided midfielder known for his excellent passing and high workrate.

Daniel TOZSER (Hun)
Age 26 (12.05.85)
Capable of operating in a defensive role or wide on the left.

FORWARDS

Elianiv BARDA (Isr)
Age 29 (15.12.81)
Pacy winger or striker bought from Hapoel Tel Aviv in 2007.

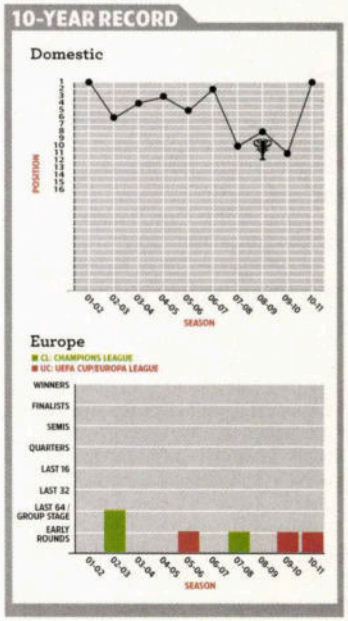
Anthony LIMBOMBE
Age 17 (15.07.94)
Belgium youth international at his best when turning on the style on the right flank.

Kennedy NWANGANGA (Ngr)
Age 20 (15.08.90)
Back-up attacker whose goal in the final game of last season gave Genk the title.

Marvin OGUNJIMI
Age 23 (12.10.87)
Largely unknown 12 months ago, this Belgium-born front runner of Nigerian descent is now a flatlands star.

Jelle VOSSEN
Age 22 (22.03.89)
Target man who was the top scorer in Belgium last season with 20 goals.

10-YEAR RECORD



BELGIUM

Standard Liege

THE COACH

Jose RIGA

Age 53 (30.07.57)
His time at lesser lights Mons and Vise has not stopped him building a solid reputation as a promoter of youth and all-round innovator.

(All ages as of 01.08.11)

Duchatelet's low key industrial revolution

Stade de Sclessin...Standard's 30,000-capacity stadium is one of Belgium's most atmospheric

As proved by the north-west of England and Germany's Ruhr region, former industrial heartlands make for natural footballing hotbeds – and that goes for the old mine and mill city of Liege, where Standard are now a national institution.

No other ground in Belgium has as much atmosphere as Standard's Sclessin, and on the pitch the house style is that of 11 totally committed warriors. The flip side is the poor leadership that took the club close to bankruptcy in the late 1990s.

New owner Roland Duchatelet is one of Belgium's richest men but there will be no spending spree. The annual budget is a mere £17.5million, with ambitions for this season - the Champions League group stage and at least runners-up spot on the domestic front - stated in hushed tones.

GOALKEEPERS

Srdan BLAZIC (Mne)
Age 28 (26.11.82)
Signed from Greek club Levadiakos in the summer of 2010. A full international.

Sinan BOLAT (Tur)
Age 22 (03.09.88)
Scored with a header in a Champions League match against AZ in December 2009.

DEFENDERS

Laurent CIMAN
Age 25 (05.08.85)
Uncompromising central defender or right-back who has won three caps for Belgium.

FELIPE (Bra)
Age 24 (15.05.87)
No-holds-barred central defender signed from Coritiba in 2009.

Elaquim MANGALA (Fra)
Age 20 (13.02.91)
Much-improved centre-back. Scored Standard's first-ever Champions League goal, against Arsenal in 2009.

Daniel OPARE (Gha)
Age 20 (18.10.90)
Right-back bought from Real Madrid a year ago. A standout at the 2007 Under-17 World Cup.

Sebastien POCOGNOLI
Age 23 (01.08.87)
On Standard's books as a schoolboy, the left-back returned last year after stints at Genk and AZ.

Jelle VAN DAMME
Age 27 (10.10.83)
Hard man central defender, left-back, or midfielder, signed in January from Wolves.

Plus: Dino **ARSLANAGIC** (Age 18, 24.04.93), Abdelfattah **BOUKHRISS** (Mor; Age 24, 22.10.86), Victor **RAMOS** (Bra; Age 22, 05.05.89)

TACTICS

New boss Riga will aim to add a bit more refinement and imagination to the club's traditional hard-running style. He is looking for better ball circulation and for his charges to be on the front foot from the first minute to the last. Nong can drop off main forward Tchite to become a deep-lying second striker.

4-4-2

MIDFIELDERS

Pape CAMARA (Sen)
Age 19 (24.09.91)
All-action enforcer who rose to the occasion last season after being recalled from a loan with Sint-Truiden.

Mehdi CARCELA (Mor)
Age 22 (01.07.89)
Capable of lining up anywhere in midfield, he always offers a goal threat.

Steven DEFOUR
Age 23 (15.04.88)
Belgium's player of the year in 2007, best known for his box-to-box bursts and passing.

Guy DUFOUR
Age 24 (14.03.87)
Talented left-footer recruited in the summer from second division Lommel. Also played for Anderlecht, PSV and Volendam.

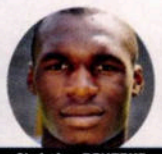
Mbaye LEYE (Sen)
Age 28 (01.12.82)
Formerly with Zulte-Waregem, he joined Standard from Gent in 2010. Three caps for his country.

Geoffrey MUJANGI BIA
Age 21 (12.08.89)
Attacking midfielder or winger. Born in DR Congo, but brought up in Brussels.

Plus: Edenilson **BERGONSI** (Bra; Age 23, 13.09.87), Franck **BERRIER** (Fra; Age 27, 02.02.84), Paul-Jose **MPOKU** (Age 19, 19.04.92)

FORWARDS

Michy BATSHUAYI
Age 17 (02.10.93)
Made his league debut for Standard in February.



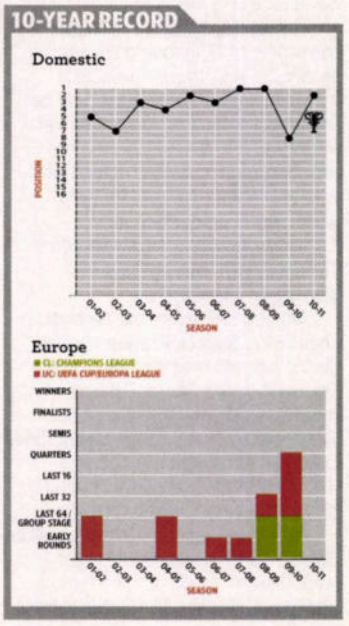
Christian BENTEKE
Age 20 (03.12.90)
Belgium international of Congolese origin, known for his front-running ability and stubbornness. On loan at Mechelen last season.

Aloys NONG (Cam)
Age 27 (16.10.83)
Has done the rounds, in Belgium, playing for RFC Liege, Vise, Brussels, Kortrijk and Mechelen.

Mohammed TCHITE (Brd)
Age 27 (31.01.84)
In his second stint leading the Standard line. Previously with Racing Santander and Anderlecht.

Moussa TRAORE (IvC)
Age 21 (19.04.90)
Spent last season on loan at Zulte-Waregem.

10-YEAR RECORD



CZECH REPUBLIC

Plzen all geared up for back-to-back title push

Double hope...Vrba aims to lead Plzen to a second league title

Key dates

Season starts
July 29, 2011
Winter break
November 26, 2011 to February 23, 2012
Season ends
May 25, 2012

It's been 30 years since a Czech team from outside Prague has won consecutive league championships, but **Viktoria Plzen**'s chances of doing just that are boosted by the advantage of a relatively stable squad.

The loss of forward Jan Rezek, the scorer of 11 league goals last season, to Anorthosis Famagusta in Cyprus has been counteracted by the arrival of Hradec Kralove striker Vaclav Pilar. Coach Pavel Vrba has also boosted his attack-minded side with Slavia front man Jakub Hora, while Slovak defender Marian Cisovsky, previously with Politehnica Timisoara in Romania, should strengthen the back four.

Although Plzen are the defending champions, **Sparta Prague** will still be the team to beat, despite Czech Under-21 striker Tomas Pekhart moving to Nuremberg and defender Jiri Kladrubsky joining Slovan Bratislava. Coach Martin Hasek has also says 37-year-old Tomas Repka's starting place is no longer "unshakeable".

New faces include midfielder Milan Jirasek from Internazionale, right-back Vlastimil Vidlicka from Teplice and Slovak forward Martin Juhar from Kosice, while forward Miroslav Slepicka returns from Dinamo Zagreb for his second spell at the club.

Having qualified for Europe for the past two seasons, **Baumit Jablonec** coach Frantisek Komnacky had little incentive to change his squad and he has retained the services of Czech international David Lafata, whose 19 goals made him the league's top scorer last season, and young Sparta loanee Lukas Tresnak, who partnered Lafata so effectively in the spring.

Former Czech international Marek Heinz returns from Ferencvaros to the club where he began his career, **Sigma Olomouc**, and is joined by Adam Varadi from Plzen. Forwards Michal Ordos and Pavel Sultes have left for Kapfenberg in Austria and Polonia Warsaw respectively.

Under new coach Miroslav Koubek, last season's Czech Cup winners **Mlada Boleslav** should again be one of the stronger sides. French attacking midfielder Alexandre Mendy's departure for Gornik Zabrze of Poland has prompted the signing of Jan Stohanzl from **Bohemians 1905**, who may struggle to match last term's unexpected sixth place. New coach Pavel Medynsky, formerly assistant to Pavel Hoftych, who left for Slovakia's Spartak Trnava, will miss Stohanzl, but a defence marshalled by goalkeeper Radek Snozik should be solid enough.

Jaroslav Silhavy has taken over as coach of **Slovan Liberec** following Petr Rada's move to Teplice, and he has promised to adopt a more attacking style than he did at Ceske Budejovice. He'll be helped by striker Jan Blazek's return from Larissa in Greece, plus the signing of two young forwards from Brno: Michael Rabusic and Josef Sural. Czech Republic international Jiri Stajner remains Liberec's marquee player, but midfielder Borek Dockal, the Czech Under-21 captain, could leave.

Last season's newcomers **Hradec Kralove** exceeded expectations with an eighth-place finish, but coach Vaclav Kotal will be handicapped this term by the loan of Pilar to Plzen.

Slavia Prague's new owners, Natland Group, are trying to tackle the financial crisis that engulfed the club last season and another difficult campaign lies ahead. Veteran keeper Martin Vaniak's retirement and stylish midfielder Karol Kisel's return to Sydney deny coach Michal Petrous last season's most influential players and transfer funds remain limited.

Former Czech national team coach Rada returns for his third spell at **Teplice**, where last season's 10th-place finish cost Jiri Plisek his job. Despite the losses of stalwart Pavel Verbir, who has retired, and Vidlicka to Sparta, Rada plans no major new signings, saying that his current squad, which includes sometime Czech international Stepan Vachousek, is big enough.

Jiri Kotrba returns to coach **Dynamo Ceske Budejovice** and he will be hoping to rejuvenate an ageing first team with players from the youth set-up. **Slovacko** are another club with limited ambition. Leading scorer Petr Svancara's contract hasn't been renewed, with coach Miroslav Soukup instead banking on tall striker Libor Dosek, signed from Teplice.

After guiding **Pribram** to safety at the end of last season, caretaker coach David Vavruska has been given the job full-time. His youth-football background is seen as a plus at a club where the emphasis is increasingly on bringing through youngsters – and avoiding relegation.

Karol Marko remains in charge at **Banik Ostrava**, having taken charge during a disappointing season that almost ended in relegation. Expectations are low at one of the country's best-supported clubs, with the team looking to rebuild with youth players, but the loss of Cape Verde wing-back Fernando Neves to French side Chateauroux is a particular blow.

Revived in 2001, one of Czech football's most famous names, **Dukla Prague**, return to the top flight for the first time in 19 years. Unlike the army teams of old, however, Lubos Kozel's side will be focused on avoiding relegation – a task made more difficult by the departure of Cameroonian striker Dani Chigou, last season's second division top scorer.

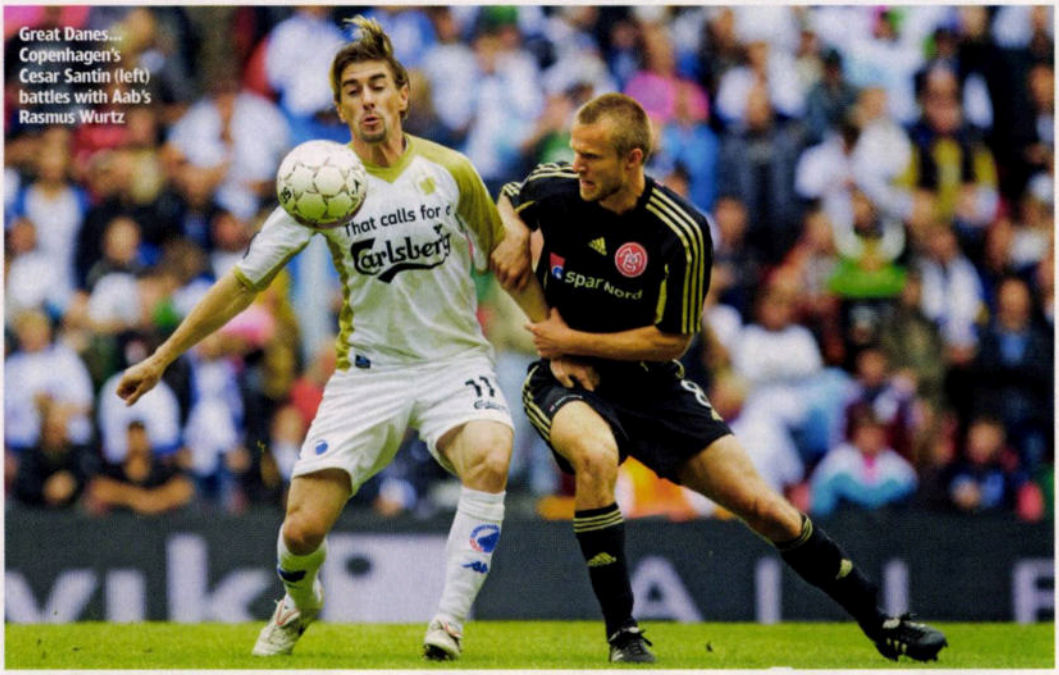
Debt-ridden Prague side **Viktoria Zizkov** gained promotion despite players going unpaid for several months, but they will find staying up tough. Top scorer Miroslav Markovic is now with Dukla and they could struggle to retain Czech Under-21 goalkeeper Tomas Vaclik.

Sam Beckwith

Going forward...international Pilar (left)

SIGNING OF THE SUMMER
VACLAV PILAR (Viktoria Plzen)
The 22-year-old forward joins the defending champions on loan this season from Hradec Kralove after winning a call-up to the Czech Republic squad for the Kirin Cup last term.

Contenders line up to challenge Copenhagen



Great Danes... Copenhagen's Cesar Santin (left) battles with Aab's Rasmus Wurtz

Key dates

Season starts
July 16, 2011
Winter break
December 4, 2011 to March 2, 2012
Season ends
May 25, 2012

The new Superliga season probably represents the best chance in recent times for **Copenhagen**'s domination to be properly challenged. But that's not so much because their rivals have made strides to narrowing the gap in quality, more that the perennial champions may be vulnerable due to a change in coach and the exit of several long-serving performers.

While last term's runners-up **OB Odense** ought to be the obvious candidates to benefit, **Brondby** – once the powerhouse of Danish soccer, but struggling in the past few years since the departure of Michael Laudrup as coach – look capable of making a realistic title challenge under the cool, understated guidance of Henrik Jensen. A long-serving player at the club, Jensen has been at the helm for 15 months of steady progress, assisted in no small measure by the burgeoning talent of his own son, Mike Jensen, in midfield.

The younger Jensen showed his promise in the European Under-21 tournament, and Brondby have other rising stars such as Nicolaj Agger, the cousin of Liverpool defender Daniel Agger, and their robust Swedish captain Max Von Schlebrugge at the heart of the defence.

Or could this finally be the year for **Midtjylland**, who finished fourth last time out and have twice been runners-up and twice placed third during the past decade? The nearly club were thrown into turmoil in April when coach Allan Kuhn resigned and they have gambled by appointing 39-year-old assistant boss Glen Riddersholm to his first senior management role. The new man, however, was impressive when in charge of the national under-17 side and his team have famous names in Christian Sivebaek, son of former Manchester United full-back John Sivebaek, and striker Morten Nielsen, who was with Chelsea as a youngster and is the son of former Denmark international Benny Nielsen.

Midfield talent...Brondby starlet Mike Jensen

Kuhn has quickly resurfaced at his former club **Aab Aalborg**, where he is now assistant to coach Kent Nielsen. In theory, they should provide the strongest leadership pairing in the Superliga for the last club to win the title other than Copenhagen. Assessing their prospects will be hard until the transfer window has closed as they have lost three excellent players in defender Michael Lumb, striker Morten Duncan Rasmussen and goalkeeper Karim Zaza without signing any replacements so far.

There was a general lack of incoming transfers at Superliga clubs in the opening weeks of the window, but one intriguing move was that of striker Mikkel Beckmann to ambitious **Nordsjaelland**. His acquisition by the Danish Cup winners will complement a side that includes Andreas Laudrup, son of Michael. The preparations of the club were disrupted, however, when manager Morten Wieghorst left to become the new coach of Denmark Under-21s.

Another young Laudrup, Mads, also a son of Michael, will be lining up in the Superliga as well, playing for newly-promoted **HB Koge**, who have profited from the merger of Herfolge and Koge. They have been astutely guided into the top flight by former Lithuania international Aurelijus Skarbalius, who originally took the reins at Herfolge in 2006.

The other promoted club, **AGF Aarhus**, traditionally one of the country's leading sides, appear set to struggle with a relatively inexperienced squad, although it does include two former Manchester United apprentices in Mark Howard and Adam Eckersley.

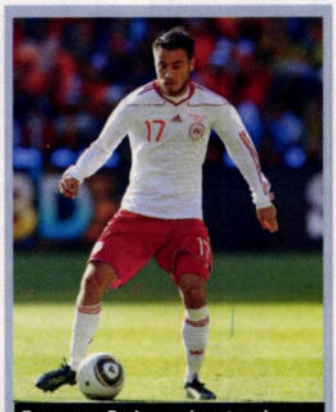
The strongest of the rest of the league are **Silkeborg**, led by Troels Bech, who won the Superliga title as a player with the club in 1994. Times have changed since, but Bech is a clever coach who should keep the club stable.

Horsens have a fascinating coach in Johnny Molby. A cousin of former Liverpool legend Jan Molby, he saved the club from relegation against the odds last season.

Most people's favourites to make the drop this time are **SonderjyskE**, another fusion club created from several towns in southern Jutland. Despite few star names, what they lack in quality they make up for with lashings of local pride.

And **Lyngby**, a club with almost no cash but a very fine youth system, did wonderfully well to stay up last time in their first season back in the Superliga. They defied the predictions of most critics, but could struggle for a repeat performance this time.

Jim Holden


Top move...Beckmann has stayed up

SIGNING OF THE SUMMER
MIKKEL BECKMANN
(Nordsjaelland)
The 27-year-old has always had talent, but his career has been blighted by a series of knee injuries. Hopes are that a move from relegated Randers will now help him add to his six Denmark caps.

DENMARK

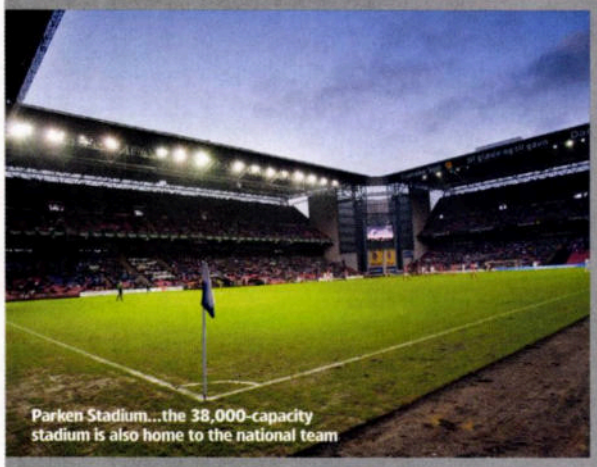
Copenhagen

THE COACH

Roland NILSSON (Swe)
Age 47 (27.11.63)
Former Sweden international who joined as coach in 2011 after a successful spell in charge of Malmo.

(All ages as of 01.08.11)

German leavers will make Nilsson's task harder than before



Parken Stadium...the 38,000-capacity stadium is also home to the national team

Last season saw Copenhagen produce the best-ever showing by a Danish side in the Champions League when they made it through the group stage, impressing in two close-fought matches with Barcelona along the way. Unfortunately, their prospects this time around seem much less certain.

Coach Stale Solbakken has departed for Cologne and he has been followed into the Bundesliga by three key players: Oscar Wendt, Zdenek Pospech and skipper William Kvist. In addition, veteran winger Jesper Gronkjaer has retired.

Seasoned internationals Christian Grindheim and Ragnar Sigurdsson have been brought in, but some of new boss Roland Nilsson's fringe players will need to perform this time around.

GOALKEEPERS

Kim CHRISTENSEN
Age 32 (16.07.79)
Hit the headlines during a spell with Gothenburg when he moved the goalposts in order to reduce the size of his goal.

Johan WILAND (Swe)
Age 30 (24.01.81)
Has been the regular first choice since signing from Elfsborg in 2009. Played for Sweden at Euro 2008.

DEFENDERS

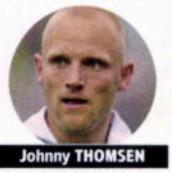
Pierre BENGTSSON (Swe)
Age 23 (12.04.88)
Left-back who made his international debut shortly before joining from Superliga outfit Nordsjaelland during the January transfer window.

Mathias JORGENSEN
Age 21 (23.04.90)
Central defender, made his international debut at the age of 18. Nicknamed "Zanka" after a character in the film *Cool Runnings*.

Solvi OTTESEN (Ice)
Age 27 (18.02.84)
Central defender who scored the goal against Rosenborg that secured qualification for last season's Champions League group stage.

Bryan OVIEDO (CR)
Age 21 (18.02.90)
Spent last season on loan at Nordsjaelland. Will face stiff competition from Bengtsson for the left-back spot.

Ragnar SIGURDSSON (Ice)
Age 25 (19.06.86)
Centre-back who was linked with Serie A, Bundesliga and Premier League clubs before joining Copenhagen for £800,00.



Johnny THOMSEN
Age 29 (26.02.82)
Right-back signed this summer from SonderjyskE. Has three caps.

TACTICS

Under previous boss Solbakken the side also lined up in a rigid 4-4-2 system. However, new coach Nilsson appeared to have a far more flexible approach in pre-season friendlies. Claudemir provides guile in midfield, but much will depend on the power and pace of N'Doye up front.

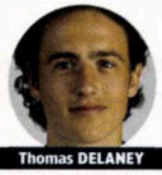
4-4-2

MIDFIELDERS

Martin BERGVOLD
Age 27 (20.02.84)
Spent four years with Copenhagen before signing for Serie A outfit Livorno in 2007. Returned home in 2010.

Christian BOLANOS (CR)
Age 27 (17.05.84)
Skilful and energetic right-winger who had an earlier spell with Odense. Signed from Norwegian club Start last year.

CLAUDEMIR (Bra)
Age 23 (27.03.88)
Playmaker who was outstanding last term in his first season at the Parken. Hailed by former boss Stale Solbakken as one of his best signings.



Thomas DELANEY
Age 19 (03.09.91)
Danish Under-19 player of the year in 2009, he is of American descent.

Christian GRINDHEIM (Nor)
Age 28 (17.07.83)
Hard-working and combative, signed from Dutch side Heerenveen in June. Scored in Norway's 1-0 win over Germany in 2009.

Martin VINGAARD
Age 26 (20.03.85)
Consistent performer since joining from Esbjerg in 2009. A knee injury is likely to rule him out for the opening weeks of the season.

Plus: Thomas **KRISTENSEN** (Age 28, 17.04.83), Saban **OZDOGAN** (Age 21, 14.03.90)

FORWARDS

Johan ABSALONSEN
Age 25 (16.09.85)
A critical season for the Denmark international who has only made a handful of appearances since switching from Odense in 2010.

Pape Pate DIOUF (Sen)
Age 25 (04.04.86)
Left-winger signed from Molde in July after six seasons with the Norwegian club.

Soren FREDERIKSEN
Age 21 (07.08.89)
Recalled from loan at SonderjyskE, but set for a stint on the sidelines after injuring his knee just prior to the Euro Under-21s.

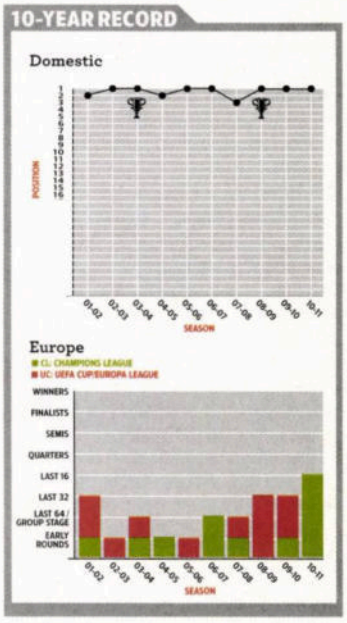
Dame N'DOYE (Sen)
Age 26 (21.02.85)
Topped the Superliga scoring charts last season and has bagged 42 goals in 74 matches for the club since his arrival from Crete in 2009.

Morten NORDSTRAND
Age 28 (08.06.83)
Prolific marksman who was once dubbed "Denmark's baby-faced assassin", injuries have blighted his progress in recent seasons.

Cesar SANTIN (Bra)
Age 30 (24.02.81)
Spent five years in Sweden with Kalmar before signing for Copenhagen three years ago.

Plus: Kenneth **ZOHORE** (Age 17, 31.01.94)

10-YEAR RECORD



DENMARK

OB Odense

THE COACH

Henrik CLAUSEN

Age 40 (03.05.71) After his career was ended by injury at the age of 19, he has worked in a variety of coaching roles at the club since 1994.

(All ages as of 01.08.11)

Clausen's men hope to beat their Champions League hoodoo

TRE-FOR Park... OB's home ground has a capacity of 15,790

Runners-up behind Copenhagen for the past three Super Liga seasons, OB will be hoping to break their Champions League duck this term and win for the first time, after five defeats and a draw previously.

Their best European run was back in the 1994-95 season when they sensationally beat Real Madrid 2-0 en route to the quarter-finals of the UEFA Cup. This time around, however, Henrik Clausen's side will be happy just to make it beyond the third qualifying round.

Domestically, their solid, resilient defence will once again make them a hard team to beat and they look set to be Copenhagen's nearest challengers for a championship which they have won three times – the last of their successes coming in 1989.

GOALKEEPERS

Mads TOPPEL

Age 29 (30.01.82) Formerly with B1909 and Randers, signed from Norwegian outfit Tromso earlier this year.

Stefan WESSELS (Ger)

Age 32 (28.02.79) Signed from Basle in January to replace Roy Carroll, he has spent most of his career as a reserve.

Plus: Daniel **KROG** (Age 20, 14.03.11)

DEFENDERS

Anders Moller CHRISTENSEN

Age 34 (26.07.77) Veteran Denmark centre-back who made his name in Belgium with Gent.

Bernard MENDY (Fra)

Age 29 (20.08.81) France right-back who loves to attack. Joined in February from Hull City.

Tore REGINIUSSEN (Nor)

Age 25 (10.04.86) Centre-back signed this summer from Schalke, where he failed to break into the first team.

Espen RUUD (Nor)

Age 27 (26.02.84) Made the right-back position his own after 2008 move from Norwegian side Odd Grenland. Has also established himself in the Norway team.

Chris SORENSEN

Age 34 (27.07.77) Vastly experienced left-back has made more than 300 club appearances, picking up five Denmark caps along the way.

Jonas TROEST

Age 26 (04.03.85) Reserve centre-back who had a brief spell in the Bundesliga with Hanover.

Plus: Niklas **HANSEN** (Age 20, 10.02.91), Daniel **HOEGH** (Age 21, 06.01.90), Kasper **LARSEN** (Age 18, 25.01.93), Oliver **LARSEN** (Age 19, 12.11.91)

TACTICS

Clausen has been trying out a 4-5-1 strategy in pre-season, but with the club having two big target men on their books and hopes of signing another forward, he may well be tempted to adopt a more flexible 4-3-3 approach to his formation when playing in the Champions League.

4-3-3

MIDFIELDERS

Hans Henrik ANDREASEN

Age 32 (10.01.79) Energetic central midfielder who has been a regular since signing in 2007.

Eric DJEMBA-DJEMBA (Cam)

Age 30 (04.05.81) Has now established himself after his disappointing spells at Manchester United and Aston Villa.

Timmi JOHANSEN

Age 24 (08.05.87) Looking to break into the first team this term after a loan spell at Viborg.

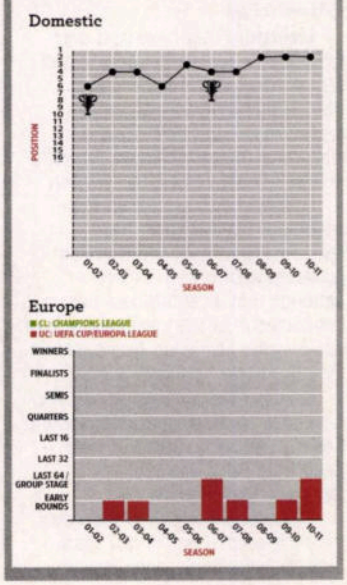
Andreas JOHANSSON (Swe)

Age 33 (05.07.78) Playmaker who joined from Aab Aalborg after a spell at Wigan Athletic. The last of his 16 caps came in 2008.

Kalilou TRAORE (Mli)

Age 23 (09.09.87) A big hit with both fans and critics since his arrival from Croatian side Istra 1961 during 2010.

10-YEAR RECORD



FORWARDS

Rurik GISLASON (Ice)

Age 23 (25.02.88) Iceland Under-21 striker who spent two seasons with Charlton Athletic. Equally adept in midfield or up front.

Bashkim KADRII

Age 19 (09.07.91) Of Albanian descent, he was picked up from second division side B93. Scored for Denmark at the 2011 Euro Under-21s.

RASMUS FALK Jensen

Age 19 (15.01.92) Signed with schoolfriend and future Ajax star Christian Eriksen. Finally broke into the first team last season.

Jacob SCHOOP

Age 22 (23.12.88) Signed after an impressive season with city rivals Fyn last term.

Morten SKOUBO

Age 31 (30.06.80) Signed in June after stints in Germany, England, Holland and Spain - where he scored one of the fastest La Liga goals, for Real Sociedad.

Peter UTAKA (Nga)

Age 27 (12.02.84) Topped the Superliga scoring charts two seasons ago. Was used as a lone striker in pre-season but was strongly linked with a move away.

ENGLAND

Title race expands into a six-way battle

Key dates

Season starts
August 13, 2011
Season ends
May 13, 2012

Alex Ferguson believes the rise of Manchester City and the revival of Liverpool under Kenny Dalglish means that the top six teams will be competing for the title this season.

"We used to talk about a top four, with ourselves, Arsenal, Chelsea and Liverpool," says Ferguson. "You can't say that any more. Manchester City have definitely come into the frame. They have a buying power better than the rest of us.

"Maybe having the run in the European Cup stretched Tottenham too much last season and they ended up being out of the top four. But you look at those teams and say any one of them could win the league."

Although **Manchester United** won the title at a canter last time out, Ferguson has deemed a comprehensive rebuilding process necessary this summer. While still seeking to add a creative midfielder, with Internazionale's Dutch playmaker Wesley Sneijder the prime target, they had already spent in excess of £50million on new players.

Chelsea will again be expected to be strong challengers, but new manager Andre Villas-Boas has yet to make his mark in the transfer market.

Manchester City, as Ferguson suggested, will be serious contenders, especially if Sergio Aguero, being lined up as a direct replacement for the unsettled Carlos Tevez, is added to their squad.

Liverpool may have paid over the odds for Jordan Henderson and Stewart Downing – £20m each, from Sunderland and Aston Villa respectively – but both players fit director of football Damien Comolli's criteria of being young and English.

Liverpool also signed Scottish midfielder Charlie Adam from relegated Blackpool and Brazilian goalkeeper Doni from Roma, although their best business was conducted in January, with the sale of out-of-sorts Fernando Torres paying for Luis Suarez and Andy Carroll.

Manager Kenny Dalglish has also reshuffled his backroom staff, sacking Sammy Lee and bringing in Kevin Keen from West Ham to work alongside Steve Clarke.

If Liverpool carry their form over from the second half of last season they will be serious contenders to

Welcome back...Dutch coach Jol has returned to London with Fulham

break back into the top four.

If they are to do that, it will most likely be at the expense of **Arsenal**, whose pre-season preparations were again dominated by the future of unsettled captain Cesc Fabregas.

Across north London, **Tottenham Hotspur**'s summer was dominated by the will he/won't he saga of Luka Modric, which did nothing to calm nerves following the disappointment of missing out on the Champions League. On the plus side, Brad Friedel will be a more solid presence in goal than Heurelho Gomes and more deals will be expected before the August 31 transfer deadline.

Former Spurs manager Martin Jol is back in England at **Fulham**, where Mark Hughes quit in the summer. The Dutchman will be a good fit at Fulham, where former Liverpool defender John Arne Riise was the main summer signing, from Roma, and much will depend on the form and fitness of another Norwegian defender, Brede Hangeland, and American forward Clint Dempsey.

Hughes had been strongly tipped to move to **Aston Villa** after quitting Fulham, but after a protracted recruitment process – during which Villa had been close to hiring former England manager Steve McClaren – former Birmingham City boss Alex McLeish was controversially hired.

McLeish has divided opinion, especially as he oversaw two relegations with Villa's city rivals. Darren Bent has been a regular goalscorer since his January arrival from Sunderland but he may lack for service following the departures of Ashley Young and Downing. Shay Given from Manchester City is a solid signing, though.

Ferguson... the man to beat

Last season **Stoke City** enjoyed their best campaign for decades, with an FA Cup Final appearance taking them into the Europa League. Their direct approach will continue to annoy many, but Jonathan Woodgate, signed on a pay-as-you-play basis from Spurs, could add some sophistication at the back, assuming he stays fit.

New in Toon...Cabaye

Everton owner Bill Kenwright has been seeking a major investor but to no avail. So far they have kept hold of key players but, with no arrivals on the horizon, a repeat of last season's seventh place looks out of reach for manager David Moyes.

In contrast, **Sunderland** manager Steve Bruce was the busiest Premier League manager this summer. With cash from the sales of Henderson and Bent, he has plenty of new faces, including defenders John O'Shea and Wes Brown from Manchester United, teenage striker Connor Wickham from Ipswich for £8m, midfielders Craig Gardner and Sebastian Larsson (both from Birmingham), and South Korea forward Ji Dong-won from Chunnam Dragons. Whether the signings can arrest the decline that hit Sunderland over the second half of last season remains to be seen.

Newcastle suffered a blow with the loss of captain Kevin Nolan to West Ham, but will hope that the arrival of French midfielders Sylvain Marveaux (free from Rennes) and Yohan Cabaye (Lille, £4.5m) will compensate. Senegalese forward Demba Ba, signed on a free transfer from West Ham, should add firepower but it could be a long and difficult season on Tyneside.

Bolton are always a difficult side to judge. Under Owen Coyle, they reached the FA Cup semi-final last season only to capitulate to Stoke. Their style of play has entertained but they also got sucked into a relegation fight. Their only signing so far, midfielder Darren Pratley on a free from Swansea, suggests they could get dragged in again.

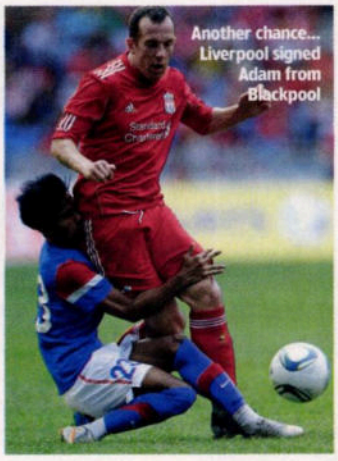
West Brom are confident that in Roy Hodgson they have found the right manager to take them to the next level after surviving their first season back in the top flight. Hodgson's achievements with Fulham are a realistic aspiration.

Blackburn may struggle with few new signings and Phil Jones' departure to Manchester United. New owners Venky's did not inspire confidence with their dalliance with Ronaldinho, but will hopefully give Steve Kean space to manage.

The permanent signing of Jamie O'Hara and the £8m capture of Roger Johnson from Birmingham should give **Wolves** the boost they need to keep battling against the drop, but it may not be pretty.

Wigan survived against the odds last season and may struggle again, with owner Dave Whelan keen to sell up ahead of retirement.

Of the promoted clubs, **Norwich City** have a bright young manager in Paul Lambert, the former Borussia Dortmund and Celtic midfielder, who has overseen successive automatic promotions. A well-run club, they did most of their pre-season shopping in the lower divisions, with the exception of James Vaughan from Everton and Belgian defender Ritchie De Laet on loan from Manchester United.

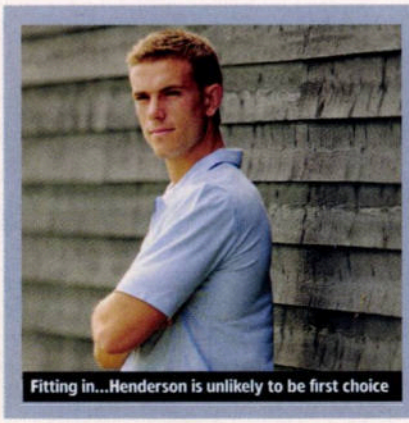

Another chance... Liverpool signed Adam from Blackpool

QPR, the Championship winners last season, are in a state of flux, with fans angry at ticket price rises and friction between the owners, Bernie Ecclestone, Flavio Briatore and the Mittal family. Manager Neil Warnock, assuming he is still there at the start of the season, is adept at building battling teams on small budgets. Jay Bothroyd, a free signing from Cardiff, looks a good piece of business but the jury is out on another fee-free deal, midfielder Kieron Dyer.

Swansea City - the first Welsh club in the English top flight since they were relegated in 1983 – also have a bright young manager in Brendan Rodgers. However, like most previous play-off winners, will struggle without major investment.

So far their only signings have been Portuguese goalkeeper Jose Moreira from Benfica, forward Danny Graham from Watford and highly rated defender Steven Caulker on loan from Tottenham.

Gavin Hamilton


Fitting in...Henderson is unlikely to be first choice

SIGNING OF THE SUMMER
JORDAN HENDERSON
(Liverpool)
Recession, what recession? Liverpool's £20million capture of the 21-year-old from Sunderland raised plenty of eyebrows in the summer given his age, inexperience and the current financial climate. And how he fits into a central midfield alongside Steven Gerrard, Lucas, Raul Meireles and another new signing, Charlie Adam, remains to be seen.

ENGLAND

Arsenal

THE COACH

Arsene WENGER (Fra)
Age 61 (22.10.49)
In charge since 1996, his judgement over tactics and transfers has been seriously questioned for the first time by a large number of fans.

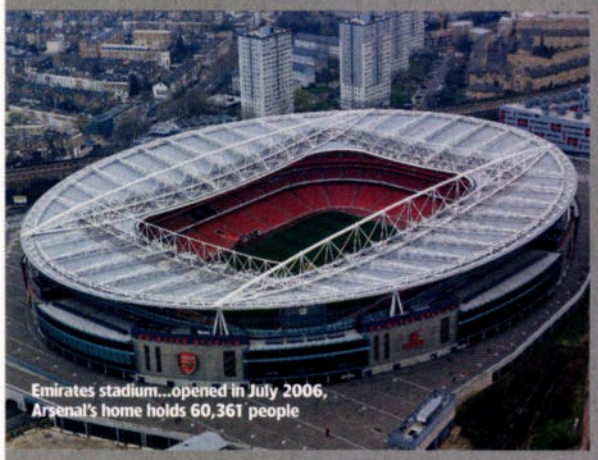
(All ages as of 01.08.11)

GOALKEEPERS

Lukasz FABIANSKI (Pol)
Age 26 (18.04.85)
Missed much of last season with a shoulder injury and will now vie with Szczesny for a starting place.

Wojciech SZCZESNY (Pol)
Age 21 (18.04.90)
Emerged as first choice last season despite a mistake in the Carling Cup Final. Son of a former Poland international.

Heat is on Wenger after six trophyless years



Emirates stadium...opened in July 2006, Arsenal's home holds 60,361 people

Arsenal's directors – led by American Stan Kroenke, majority owner after buying the late Danny Fiszman's shares earlier this year – continue to show faith in Arsene Wenger. But with no trophy since the 2005 FA Cup, the pressure is growing.

Ivan Gazidis, the club's American chief executive, continues to preach financial prudence. But while that may be appreciated by UEFA, it has left Arsenal in danger of losing touch with their rivals in Manchester and west London.

Transfer spending has been restricted by a continued commitment to repaying the cost of the Emirates Stadium move, but there is a growing realisation Wenger's dedication to stylish football may also be holding them back. Another season of underachievement may not be tolerated.

DEFENDERS

Johan DJOUROU (Swi)
Age 24 (18.01.87)
Centre-back who can also play at full-back or defensive midfield. Has been at the club since the age of 16.

Kieran GIBBS
Age 21 (26.09.89)
Left-back who is a natural replacement for Gael Clichy. Already an England international.

Laurent KOSCIELNY (Fra)
Age 24 (10.09.85)
Centre-back signed last season after a rapid rise from the French second tier.

Bacary SAGNA (Fra)
Age 28 (14.02.83)
France international right-back who returned to form last season following injury problems.

Sebastien SQUILLACI (Fra)
Age 30 (11.08.80)
France centre-back signed from Sevilla last summer. Struggled to hold down a place as last season progressed.

Thomas VERMAELEN (Blg)
Age 25 (14.11.85)
Commanding centre-back badly missed last season because of injury. Captain of Belgium.

Plus: Carl **JENKINSON** (Age 19, 08.02.92), Armand **TRAORE** (Fra; Age 21, 08.10.89)

TACTICS

Wenger favours a short-passing game, centred on patient build-up from the three secondary attackers playing off a main striker. That leaves Arsenal open to accusations of overplaying and lacking a killer instinct. Wilshere plays deep but could easily step into the Fabregas role should the Spaniard leave.

4-2-3-1

MIDFIELDERS

Abou DIABY (Fra)
Age 25 (11.05.86)
France international who is mostly used in a holding role but is technically good enough to play further forward.

Emmanuel EBOUE (IvC)
Age 28 (04.06.83)
Started out as a right-back but is now more likely to be used on the right side of midfield.

Cesc FABREGAS (Spa)
Age 24 (04.05.87)
Rewarded with the Arsenal captaincy last summer in a bid to stop him leaving to rejoin Barcelona.

Samir NASRI (Fra)
Age 24 (26.06.87)
His contract expires next summer, but Wenger is resolved to keep him – even if he then leaves for free in 2012.

Alexander SONG (Cam)
Age 23 (09.11.87)
Plays in a holding role. Nephew of Rigobert Song, he has 17 sisters and 10 brothers.

Jack WILSHERE
Age 19 (01.01.92)
Has emerged in the past 12 months as a crucial figure for club and country.

Plus: Aaron **RAMSEY** (Wal; Age 20, 26.12.90), Tomas **ROSICKY** (CzR; Age 30, 04.10.80)

FORWARDS

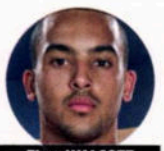
Andrei ARSHAVIN (Rus)
Age 30 (29.05.81)
His influence waned last season but he could become a key figure if Fabregas or Nasri depart.

Nicklas BENDTNER (Den)
Age 23 (16.01.88)
Does not lack for confidence but has been let down by poor technique.

Marouane CHAMAKH (Mor)
Age 27 (10.01.84)
Target man with a good touch who struggled to settle after an impressive start last season.

GERVINHO (IvC)
Age 24 (27.05.87)
Pacy left-sided attacker who excelled in Lille's title run last season as part of a three-man attack.

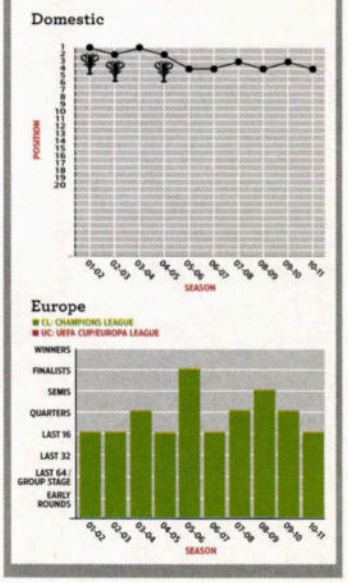
Robin VAN PERSIE (Hol)
Age 27 (06.08.83)
Centre-forward who is Wenger's first choice when fit – which is not all the time.



Theo WALCOTT
Age 22 (16.03.89)
England international still hoping to make the transition from pacy teenage winger to razor-sharp centre-forward.

Plus: Carlos **VELA** (Mex; Age 22, 01.03.89)

10-YEAR RECORD



ENGLAND
Chelsea

THE MANAGER

Andre **VILLAS-BOAS** (Por)

Age 33 (17.10.77)
Has enjoyed a meteoric rise, from opposition scout for Jose Mourinho two years ago to last season's treble at Porto.

(All ages as of 01.08.11)

GOALKEEPERS

Petr CECH (CzR)
Age 29 (20.05.82)
A key dressing-room figure since 2004 who has worn a headguard since a serious head injury in October 2006.

HILARIO (Por)
Age 35 (21.10.75)
A patient understudy to Cech since 2006, he has made only a few appearances.

Plus: Thibaut **COURTOIS** (Blg; Age 19, 11.05.92)

Owner Abramovich showing no signs of giving up hope

Stamford Bridge...still waiting for Champions League success

The Champions League remains the holy grail for owner Roman Abramovich, who has quashed suggestions he was losing interest in a club on which he lavished more than £700million since 2003.

The £50m British record signing of Fernando Torres in January demonstrated his appetite for the grand gesture in the transfer market remains undiminished, even if it did present the then-manager Carlo Ancelotti with an insurmountable selection problem.

Abramovich's solution to Chelsea's failure to progress beyond the Champions League quarter-finals last season was to fire Ancelotti – a league and cup double winner a year previously – and offer Andre Villas-Boas a three-year contract after paying Porto £13m to release him.

DEFENDERS

ALEX (Bra)
Age 28 (17.08.82)
Brazil international centre-back who has mostly been used as a reserve. Fierce shot from free-kicks.

Jose BOSINGWA (Por)
Age 28 (24.08.82)
Right-back who missed most of the 2009-10 season with a serious knee injury.

Ashley COLE
Age 30 (20.12.80)
England left-back for a decade. Dubbed "Cashley" by opposition fans irked by his off-the-pitch lifestyle.

David LUIZ (Bra)
Age 24 (22.04.87)
Centre-back who has been a big hit with fans since joining from Benfica in January. Brazil international.

John TERRY
Age 30 (07.12.80)
One-club man who, as captain, is the dominant dressing-room personality. Signs that his physical powers are waning.

Branislav IVANOVIC (Ser)
Age 27 (22.02.84)
Versatility makes him a crucial figure and he can play at centre-back, right-back or as a defensive midfielder.

Plus: Ryan **BERTRAND** (Age 21, 05.08.89), Paulo **FERREIRA** (Por; Age 32, 18.01.79), Patrick **VAN AANHOLT** (Hol; Age 20, 29.08.90)

TACTICS

Before moving to England, Villas-Boas favoured an expansive, attack-minded 4-3-3 formation with Porto. Whether he will stick to these principals is still unclear – as is the problem of whether the new coach can manage to include both Torres and Drogba in such a starting line-up.

4-3-3

MIDFIELDERS

Michael ESSIEN (Gha)
Age 28 (03.12.82)
Dynamic Ghana international who could be sidelined until Christmas with a serious knee injury.

Gael KAKUTA (Fra)
Age 20 (21.06.91)
His 2007 signing from Lille led to a transfer ban for Chelsea. Impressed on loan at Fulham last season.

Frank LAMPARD
Age 33 (20.06.78)
Only a few months younger than his new manager. Less dynamic these days but still key.

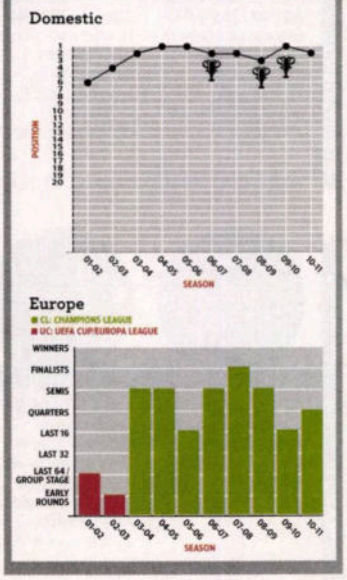
Josh McEACHRAN
Age 18 (01.03.93)
Last season he became the first Champions League debutant born after the competition was launched in 1992.

John Obi MIKEL (Ngr)
Age 24 (22.04.87)
The subject of a tug-of-war with Manchester United as a teenager, he has since divided opinion over his effectiveness.

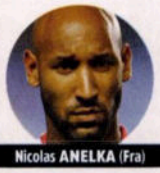
RAMIRES (Bra)
Age 24 (24.03.87)
Brazil international who took time to acclimatise to English football following his £18m move from Benfica last summer.

Plus: Yossi **BENAYOUN** (Isr; Age 31, 05.05.80), Yuri **ZHIRKOV** (Rus; Age 27, 20.08.83)

10-YEAR RECORD



FORWARDS

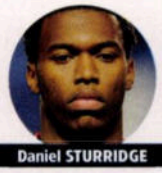


Nicolas ANELKA (Fra)
Age 32 (14.03.79)
Much travelled former France international who has been tipped to move since Torres' arrival.

Didier DROGBA (IvC)
Age 33 (11.03.78)
Powerful centre-forward who has struggled to show he can play with Torres.

Salomon KALOU (IvC)
Age 25 (05.08.85)
Mostly used in a wide attacking role, usually from the bench.

Florent MALOUDA (Fra)
Age 31 (03.06.80)
Wide man who has been a regular goalscorer from the left side of midfield.



Daniel STURRIDGE
Age 21 (01.09.89)
England Under-21 striker who is back at Stamford Bridge after a successful loan to Bolton Wanderers last season.

Fernando TORRES (Spa)
Age 27 (20.03.84)
A World Cup winner and a favourite of Roman Abramovich. Yet to shine since his £50m transfer from Liverpool in January.

ENGLAND

Manchester City

THE COACH

Roberto MANCINI (Ita)
Age 47 (27.11.64)
Former Italy striker who coached Fiorentina, Lazio and Inter before taking over at City in December 2009.

(All ages as of 01.08.11)

GOALKEEPERS

Joe HART
Age 24 (19.04.87)
England's brightest goalkeeping talent, he has seen off Shay Given (who City sold to Aston Villa this summer).

Stuart TAYLOR
Age 30 (28.11.80)
Reserve who has played just one game since joining from Aston Villa in 2009.

Plus: Gunnar **NIELSEN** (Far; Age 24, 07.10.86)

Middle East money gives City clout to play with the big boys

Etihad Stadium...City's newly named home has a capacity of 47,805

In less than three years, Sheikh Mansour's Abu Dhabi United investment group has poured more than £500million into City, turning the club from a Premier League curio into the world's richest football club.

A recent £400m naming-rights deal – the biggest club sponsorship ever – may allow City to carry on spending, but it will also test UEFA's new Financial Fairplay regulations to the limit.

Already there are signs that City are changing tack, playing hardball with Carlos Tevez over his desire to leave and adopting a more sophisticated scouting operation. New signing Stefan Savic was the first proof of that approach, but it is hard to believe that he will not be joined by big-name signings before the August transfer deadline.

DEFENDERS

Gael CLICHY (Fra)
Age 25 (26.07.85)
France left-back signed from Arsenal this summer. He claimed he moved because he wanted to win silverware.

Vincent KOMPANY (Blg)
Age 25 (10.04.86)
Impressive figure last season playing at centre-back, though he can also play in defensive midfield.

Joleon LESCOTT
Age 28 (16.08.82)
England centre-back who may find himself squeezed out by Savic's arrival and Kolo Toure's anticipated return.

Micah RICHARDS
Age 23 (24.06.88)
Powerful right-back or centre-half, who earned an England debut at 18 but has not impressed current coach Fabio Capello.

Stefan SAVIC (Mne)
Age 20 (08.01.91)
Centre-back signed from Partizan Belgrade for £6m this summer.

Kolo TOURE (IvC)
Age 30 (19.03.81)
Suspended until September after testing positive for banned substance which he claims was in his wife's diet pills.

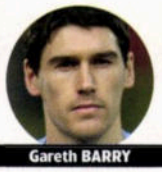
Plus: Dedryck **BOYATA** (Blg; Age 20, 28.11.90), Aleksandar **KOLAROV** (Ser; Age 25, 10.11.85), Pablo **ZABALETA** (Arg; Age 26, 16.01.85)

TACTICS

Mancini has often been criticised for a safety-first approach to matches which involves using two defensive midfielders and playing Yaya Toure behind a lone striker. However, he has argued that before City can beat the likes of Arsenal and Chelsea, they have to stop losing to them.

4-2-3-1

MIDFIELDERS



Gareth BARRY
Age 30 (23.02.81)
England international signed from Aston Villa in summer 2009. Usually employed by Mancini in a holding role.

Nigel DE JONG (Hol)
Age 26 (30.11.84)
Holland international who has been criticised for his overly aggressive tackling and combative approach.

Adam JOHNSON
Age 24 (14.07.87)
England winger who was signed from Middlesbrough in January 2010.

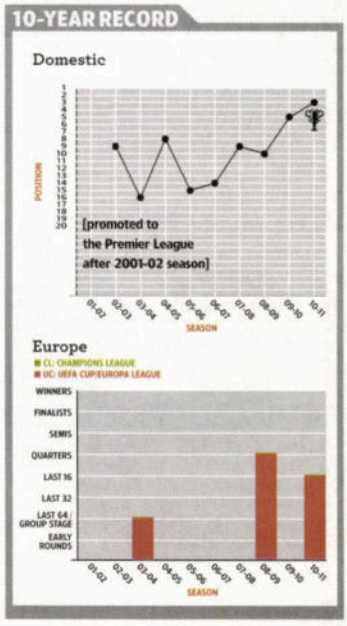
James MILNER
Age 25 (04.01.86)
Versatile England international signed from Aston Villa last summer. Most effective when played in a wide role.

David SILVA (Spa)
Age 25 (08.01.86)
World Cup winner signed from Valencia last summer. Attacks from a wide position behind a main striker.

Yaya TOURE (IvC)
Age 28 (13.05.83)
Brother of Kolo, he is used by Mancini in a more advanced role than he was used to at Barcelona.

Plus: Michael **JOHNSON** (Age 23, 03.03.88), Shaun **WRIGHT-PHILLIPS** (Age 29, 25.10.81)

10-YEAR RECORD



FORWARDS

Emmanuel ADEBAYOR (Tog)
Age 27 (26.02.84)
Spent last season on loan at Real Madrid and City are looking to offload him again.

Mario BALOTELLI (Ita)
Age 20 (12.08.90)
Born in Italy to Ghanaian parents and adopted by an Italian family as a young child. Explosive acceleration but an equally quick temper.

Craig BELLAMY (Wal)
Age 31 (13.07.79)
Much travelled Wales international who spent last season on loan at Cardiff City.

Edin DZEKO (Bos)
Age 25 (17.03.86)
Signed in January 2011 after a prolific spell at Wolfsburg, but has yet to adapt to English football.

Carlos TEVEZ (Arg)
Age 27 (05.02.84)
Led by example last season but wants to leave. A £40m move to Corinthians in July fell through.

ENGLAND

Manchester United

THE COACH

Alex FERGUSON (Sco)
Age 69 (31.12.41)
The most successful manager in English football history with 12 league titles and two European Cups. Another Euro title remains his aim.

(All ages as of 01.08.11)

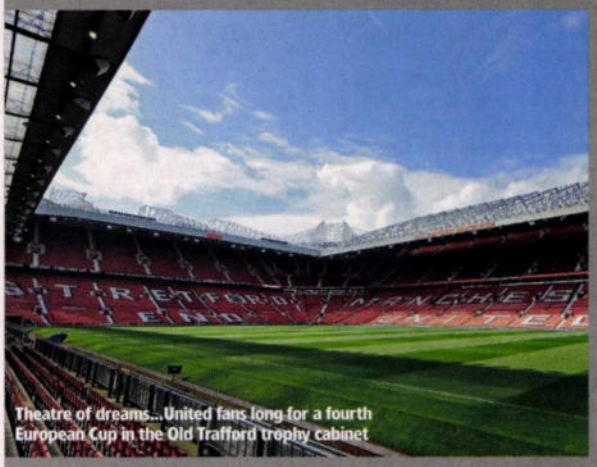
GOALKEEPERS

David DE GEA (Spa)
Age 20 (07.11.90)
Spain Under-21 keeper who was signed from Atletico Madrid for £18m this summer.

Anders LINDEGAARD (Den)
Age 27 (13.04.84)
International who joined in December but has yet to make an impact.

Plus: Ben **AMOS** (Age 21, 10.04.90)

Ferguson thirsting for more European glory



Theatre of dreams...United fans long for a fourth European Cup in the Old Trafford trophy cabinet

The country's best-supported and most successful club celebrated a record 19th English league title last season, but Barcelona's brilliance meant European triumph once again eluded them.

Success on the pitch has slowed the fan-led green-and-gold campaign against the Glazer family's ownership. More than £500million is still owed by United following the Glazers' 2005 "leveraged buyout" but fans keep flocking to Old Trafford to watch a team that has undergone major changes this summer.

Alex Ferguson is a master of rebuilding his squad from a position of domestic dominance. He believes a fourth European Cup (after 1968, 1999 and 2008) will raise United to the pantheon of Europe's greatest clubs.

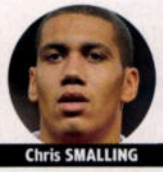
DEFENDERS

Patrice EVRA (Fra)
Age 30 (15.07.81)
Dynamic left-back who has agreed a contract extension until 2014. Back in the France team.

Rio FERDINAND
Age 32 (07.11.78)
Centre-back whose ability overrides the odd concentration lapse. Increasingly prone to injury.

Phil JONES
Age 19 (21.02.92)
England Under-21 centre-back signed in the summer from Blackburn Rovers for £16m.

RAFAEL (Bra)
Age 21 (09.07.90)
Full-back whose emergence brought forward Gary Neville's retirement. Has played more games than his twin, Fabio.



Chris SMALLING
Age 21 (22.11.89)
England Under-21 centre-back who has gone from non-league Maidstone to the Champions League with United.

Nemanja VIDIC (Ser)
Age 29 (21.10.81)
Skipper who is one of Europe's best central defenders, particularly in the air.

Plus: Jonny **EVANS** (NI; Age 23, 02.01.88), **FABIO** (Age 21, 09.07.90), Oliver **GILL** (Age 20, 15.09.90)

TACTICS

Ferguson has always favoured a high-tempo attacking game, preferably with wingers. Rooney and Hernandez are expected to be his favoured two up front, while a lack of midfield creativity was the major problem that needed solving before the August 31 transfer deadline.

4-4-1-1

MIDFIELDERS

Michael CARRICK
Age 29 (28.07.81)
England international with excellent passing ability, particularly from long-range, though his tackling has been questioned.

Darren FLETCHER (Sco)
Age 27 (01.02.84)
His energy and tenacity allows his more creative colleagues to pursue their attacking instincts.

Ryan GIGGS (Wal)
Age 37 (29.11.73)
Increasingly playing in central midfield, will revelations about his private life affect his game this season?

NANI (Por)
Age 24 (17.11.86)
Winger who has just enjoyed his best season but faces renewed competition for his United place with Young's arrival.

PARK Ji-sung (SKo)
Age 30 (25.02.81)
South Korea captain whose energy and commitment have made him a crucial figure. Most effective in a wide role.

Antonio VALENCIA (Ecu)
Age 25 (04.08.85)
Winger who missed much of last season with an ankle injury but recovered to play an important role.

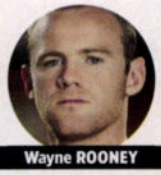
Plus: ANDERSON (Bra; Age 23, 13.04.88), Tom **CLEVERLEY** (Age 21, 12.08.89), Gabriel **OBERTAN** (Fra; Age 22, 26.02.89)

FORWARDS

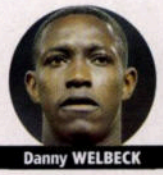
Dimitar BERBATOV (Bul)
Age 30 (30.01.81)
The Premier League's joint-top scorer last season despite being criticised for a lack of ruthlessness in front of goal.

Javier HERNANDEZ (Mex)
Age 23 (01.06.88)
Exceeded all expectations in his first season with his natural finishing ability. Nicknamed *Chicharito* (little pea).

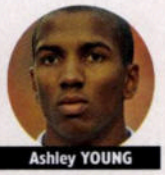
Michael OWEN
Age 31 (14.12.79)
Veteran goalscorer who had limited opportunities last season but was handed a new one-year contract.



Wayne ROONEY
Age 25 (24.10.85)
England's most gifted footballer loves to drop deep and initiate moves. Newly hirsute after summer hair transplant.



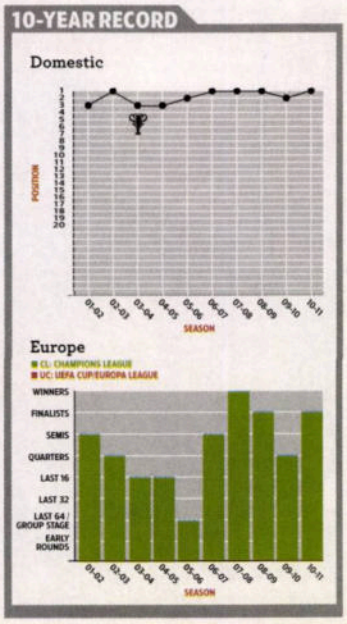
Danny WELBECK
Age 20 (26.11.90)
Back at United after a successful loan spell at Sunderland last season, which culminated in a first England cap.



Ashley YOUNG
Age 26 (09.07.85)
England winger signed from Aston Villa this summer. Can also play in a central role behind the main striker.

Also: Mame Biram **DIOUF** (Sen; Age 23, 16.12.87), Joshua **KING** (Age 19, 15.01.92), Federico **MACHEDA** (Ita; Age 19, 22.08.91)

10-YEAR RECORD



FRANCE

Little Lille point the way for Ligue 1's lesser lights

Key dates

Season starts
August 6, 2011
Winter break
December 22, 2011
to January 13, 2012
Season ends
May 20, 2012

Lille's thrilling league and cup double last season marked what looks like the beginning of a new era in French football. Not only did Rudi Garcia's little club from the north win trophies playing exciting and positive football, they also firmly banished the idea that the country's big boys could always expect to have it their own way.

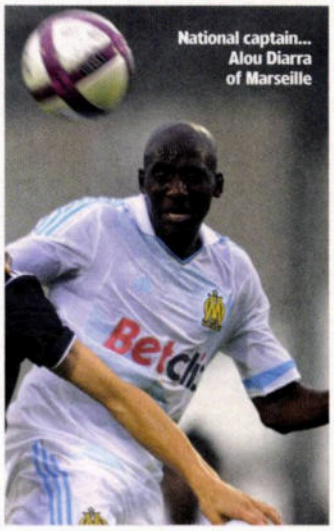
Lille's team – featuring Edin Hazard, Gervinho and Moussa Sow – was so much more entertaining than pedestrian Marseille, inconsistent Paris Saint-Germain, and inadequate Lyon and Bordeaux, that it was frankly embarrassing for the supporters and owners of France's traditional powerhouses. Which tees up the intriguing prospect that the French top flight could see an adventurous new spirit take hold this term.

In a country where caution and keeping it tight at the back have been the traditional modus operandi, there's now a real chance that coaches will decide that sending teams out to entertain and attack could perhaps be the best way to both win matches and keep the tills ringing. After all, what supporter or marketing manager wants to be associated with a negative brand?

Lille proved that you don't need massively deep pockets...but there's no doubt that they help. To that end, **Paris Saint-Germain** should be an interesting proposition as the new campaign gets under way. Having bought a 70 per cent stake in the club, the Qatar Investment Authority has the financial clout to revolutionise the underachieving capital club's fortunes. Despite finishing fourth in Ligue 1 last season, coach Antoine Kombouare's PSG are still a long way from being anything like a serious European contender, but as the sole top-flight club in a city of almost 12million inhabitants there is clearly huge potential. The financial muscle has already prised former player Leonardo out of the hands of Internazionale to become director of sport, while there is also talk of former Chelsea boss Carlo Ancelotti replacing Kombouare.

Could PSG become France's Manchester City? It's entirely possible, but reconstruction on the pitch won't happen overnight, especially since wise old heads Gregory Coupet, Ludovic Giuly and Claude Makelele all said goodbye at the end of last season. The club has already shown what its wealth can do with the signing of Lorient striker Kevin Gameiro, who was supposedly a dead cert for Valencia until the 11th hour, and highly-rated Rennes goalkeeper Nicolas Douchez. But there will surely be far bigger names arriving as the PSG revolution gathers pace.

Marseille have been relatively quiet while all this has been happening to their biggest rivals, but with coach Didier Deschamps having committed to the club, after it looked as if he might have been off to Roma, stability rather than shock waves might be just what l'OM needs.


National captain... Alou Diarra of Marseille

Lyon, meanwhile, really had no choice but to get rid of the dour Claude Puel following a third season

Addition...PSG have signed Rennes keeper Douchez

On loan...Saint-Etienne's Sinama-Pongolle

without a trophy and massive supporter unrest. His replacement, the former Arsenal player Remi Garde, steps up from within the club and has promised to combine an attractive game with steely resilience. It will be interesting to see if the walk matches the talk.

And it's managerial changes that have been at the forefront of Ligue 1 movement of late. **Bordeaux** parted company with the hapless Jean Tigana, who walked out in May after less than a season in charge, with Sochaux boss Francois Gillot replacing him after leading his former club to an impressive fifth-place spot last time out. *Les Girondins* limped home in seventh place and will need more decent players to come in alongside Nicolas Maurice-Belay, who also arrives from Sochaux, especially as France skipper Alou Diarra has moved to Marseille.

Replacing Gillot at **Sochaux** is the club's former midfielder Mehmet Bazdarevic, who returns at the age of 50 after managing Grenoble. Sochaux have lost key Senegal defender Jacques Faty and will need to recruit wisely to maintain last season's progress.

With a bigger squad **Rennes** might have mounted a decent title challenge last season. And how they must regret having let Sow join Lille, given that they managed a paltry 38 goals in the entire campaign, compared to Lille's 68. They also lost Douchez to PSG and midfielder Sylvain Marveaux to Newcastle United, so new names will be vital.

Toulouse didn't start any fires last season, but they easily absorbed the loss of talisman striker Andre-Pierre Gignac to Marseille. President Olivier Sadran is a canny operator who always gets a good financial return on any sales, sanctioning incoming players only if they represent serious value for money. With Moussa Sissoko the only one of a talented group who looks to have negotiated an exit, and coach Alain Casanova having extended his contract by two years, it will be steady as she goes for TFC.

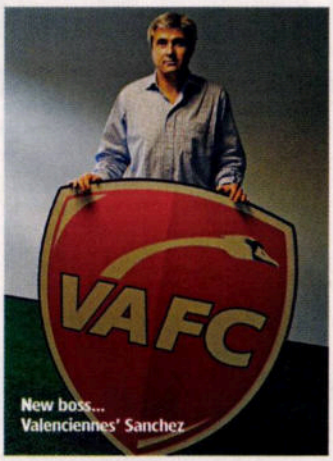
Auxerre welcome former Paris Saint-Germain boss Laurent Fournier to the club as he replaces the Nancy-bound Jean Fernandez. But with skipper and former France midfielder Benoit Pedretti having joined champions Lille you wouldn't be surprised to see l'AJA having a bit of a "banana skin" season.

Saint-Etienne have also lost a key player, Dimitri Payet, to Lille and will have difficulty replacing their *"petit general"*. Former Liverpool striker Florent Sinama-Pongolle arrives from Sporting Lisbon on a season's loan, but that won't have *Les Verts* fans exactly jumping up and down while their stadium is being rebuilt for the 2016 European Championship.

Lorient have lost their two best players, Gameiro and Morgan Amalfitano, to PSG and Marseille respectively, but will be desperate to continue an unbroken six-year stint in the top flight. **Valenciennes**, meanwhile, who finished one spot below Lorient in 11th last season, have ceded coach Philippe Montanier to Real Sociedad in Spain. New boss Daniel Sanchez (ex-Tours) will start work in the new 25,000-seater Stade du Hainaut with the sole objective of at least equalling last year's performance.

Fernandez's first task at new club **Nancy** will be to replace attacking midfielder Julien Ferret, who has left for Rennes. With former boss Pablo Correa also departing after 16 years' service in various capacities, Ligue 1 stability is all that's required during this campaign.

Montpellier found it impossible to repeat their heroics of the previous season and ended in 14th place. It's hard to predict whether they can yo-yo again, but staying in the top flight will be the priority for flamboyant president Louis Nicollin.



New boss... Valenciennes' Sanchez

Caen might well be this season's dark horses. In coach Franck Dumas they have a shrewd tactician who has built a good young squad that looks likely to be reinforced with veteran striker Pierre-Alain Frau due to arrive from Lille.

Brest went off like a bullet from a gun last season, but slipped back to 16th place by the end of the season. They will be hoping for progress, but shouldn't get their hopes up too high.

South coast **Nice** survived by the skin of their teeth back in May and promptly let 12 players leave. But will coach Eric Roy replace them with a bit more class? Veteran midfielder Camel Meriem is first through the door after leaving relegated Arles-Avignon, but they might need more than that to sleep easy in their beds.

And what of the Ligue 1 new boys? Surprise Ligue 2 champions **Evian** are looking to old heads to keep them in the top flight and with a budget of £23million thanks to the support of giant food producer Danone they might stand half a chance. **Ajaccio** look as if they'll struggle with a budget of £13m, but the club's stated policy of bonding around their Corsican heritage will clearly help in an "us against the world" kind of fashion. And finally **Dijon**, who happen to boast Chelsea and France winger Florent Malouda as an investor, will be hoping to make it a first Ligue 1 season to remember. It would have helped their cause, of course, if their best player and last season's top scorer in division two, Uruguayan striker Sebastian Ribas, had not turned down a lucrative new contract to join Italy's Genoa.

What seems abundantly clear amid all the pre-season comings and goings is that it's all up for grabs in 2011-12, which should lead to another exciting campaign of top-flight French football.

Howard Johnson

Back in Paris...Leonardo is a former PSG player

SIGNING OF THE SUMMER
LEONARDO
(Paris Saint-Germain)
The 41-year-old Brazilian coach left Internazionale at the end of last season to take the role of director of sport at PSG – the club where he played during the 1996-97 season – sending the French media into overdrive with thoughts of possible South American targets. And with the wealth of their Qatari backers to bankroll them, anything could be possible in the transfer market.

FRANCE

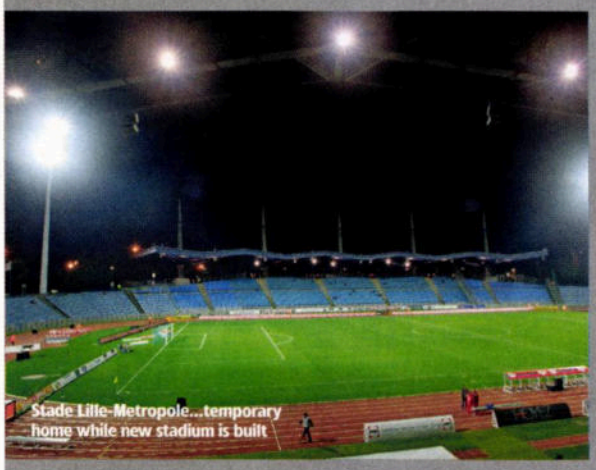
Lille

THE COACH

Rudi GARCIA
Age 47 (20.02.64)
Former Lille midfielder whose reputation has soared since leading the club to the double last season.

(All ages as of 01.08.11)

Improved budget means they can battle it out with the big boys



Stade Lille-Metropole...temporary home while new stadium is built

Under Rudi Garcia, who arrived from Le Mans in 2008, Lille have become north France's most successful club, easily eclipsing their traditionally more popular rivals Lens, who suffered the double humiliation of relegation in 2011 as LOSC secured both the league and French Cup.

Lille are prudently run and, with both Champions League participation and the opening of a new 50,000 stadium in July 2012 guaranteeing significant additional revenues, the future looks rosy.

The budget for this season has risen to more than £60million and – while still a long way behind Lyon, Marseille and PSG, they are now in the top five of the country's big spenders – with a significant war chest on which to build Lille look genuinely equipped to challenge again.

GOALKEEPERS

Vincent ENYEAMA (Ngr)
Age 28 (29.08.82)
Signed this summer on a three-year contract from Israeli outfit Hapoel Tel Aviv.

Mickael LANDREAU
Age 32 (14.05.79)
Veteran international who was in sparkling form last season and is contracted to the club until 2014.

Plus: Alexandre **OUKIDJA** (Age 22, 19.07.88)

DEFENDERS

Marko BASA (Mne)
Age 28 (29.12.82)
Signed in June from Lokomotiv Moscow as a replacement for the Valencia-bound Adil Rami.

Franck BERIA
Age 28 (23.05.83)
Can play anywhere across the back four and is approaching 150 appearances for the club.

Aurelien CHEDJOU (Cam)
Age 26 (20.06.85)
Outstanding in last season's campaign. Will have to form a new partnership with Basa this season.

Mathieu DEBUCHY
Age 25 (28.07.85)
A fearless right-back and a model of consistency who's been with the club since he was eight.

EMERSON (Bra)
Age 25 (23.02.86)
Squad player who arrived in Lille from his homeland back in 2007 and played 20 games last term.

David ROZEHNAL (CzR)
Age 30 (05.07.80)
The much-travelled central defender arrived on loan from Hamburg last summer, but has now signed a permanent three-year deal.

Plus: Pape Ndiaye **SOUARE** (Sen; Age 21, 06.06.90)

TACTICS

Garcia believes in attacking football – with two wide players providing supply lines to a recognised goal poacher – while making sure he doesn't get overrun in midfield with three hard-working, tough tacklers who also know how to distribute. Conceded less than a goal a game last season.

4-3-3

MIDFIELDERS

Florent BALMONT
Age 31 (02.02.80)
A teak-tough veteran who belies his 5ft 6in size to put in giant performances.

Stephane DUMONT
Age 28 (06.09.82)
Solid performer who's had plenty of injury problems throughout the course of his one-club career.

Eden HAZARD (Blg)
Age 20 (07.01.91)
One of Europe's most sought-after players, the Belgium international first joined Lille in 2005.

Rio MAVUBA
Age 27 (08.03.84)
France international and club captain, he is a fierce competitor who tackles hard, distributes well and leads from the front.

Ludovic OBRANIAK (Pol)
Age 26 (10.11.84)
Born in France but capped by Poland, the former lynchpin of the Lille team is now a bit-part player.

Benoit PEDRETTI
Age 30 (12.11.80)
Former international who arrived this summer from Auxerre.

Plus: Idrissa Gana **GUEYE** (Sen; Age 21, 26.09.89), Arnaud **SOUQUET** (Age 19, 12.02.92)

FORWARDS

Gianni BRUNO (Blg)
Age 19 (19.08.91)
Promoted to the senior squad for the first time for this season.

Tulio DE MELO (Bra)
Age 25 (31.08.85)
Not first choice, but has an instinct for scoring. Often came off the bench to good effect last season.

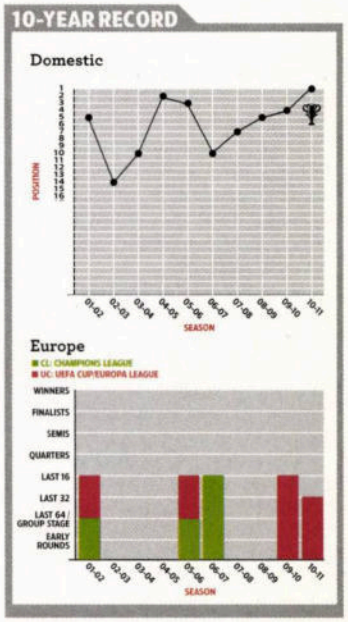
Dimitri PAYET
Age 24 (29.03.87)
Arrived this summer from Saint-Etienne with a big reputation and the brief to add some dynamic link play and score goals.

Ronny RODELIN
Age 21 (18.11.89)
Lanky striker who arrives this season from Nantes knowing he has work to do before he can aspire to being a regular.

Moussa SOW (Sen)
Age 25 (19.01.86)
Scored 25 goals in Ligue 1 last season. Good with his head and both feet, he is big, strong and technically sound.

Omar WADE (Sen)
Age 21 (15.05.90)
Two appearances last season and will be looking for more opportunities in the coming campaign.

10-YEAR RECORD



FRANCE

Lyon

THE COACH

Remi GARDE
Age 45 (03.04.66)
Quiet and unassuming former Arsenal player who took over this season from Claude Puel after being on the Lyon staff since 2003.

(All ages as of 01.08.11)

GOALKEEPERS

Hugo LLORIS
Age 24 (26.12.86)
France's first choice, he often saved his club single-handedly in last season's difficult campaign.

Remy VERCOUTRE
Age 31 (26.06.80)
Solid and reliable back-up for Lloris who has never let the team down when called upon.

Plus: Mathieu **Gorgelin** (Age 20, 05.08.90)

Non-stop domestic success now seems a long time ago

Stade de Gerland...Lyon's home arena has a capacity of 40,494

After seven successive championships at the turn of the century, three years without a trophy and debts of more than £30million mean Lyon are no longer the force they once were.

New boss Remi Garde, who has replaced Claude Puel, is a discreet man who's been promoted from within the club as a sign that Lyon are now going to do things differently, with an emphasis on "youth and shared values".

Club president Jean-Michel Aulas, a man used to spouting big ambitions for Olympique Lyonnais in the past, has targeted nothing more than Champions League qualification for the coming season – and that in itself says everything you need to know about the current atmosphere at the Stade de Gerland.

DEFENDERS

Aly CISSOKHO
Age 23 (15.09.87)
Left-back who often attracts interest from bigger clubs, despite having a reputation in France for being inconsistent.

CRIS (Bra)
Age 34 (03.06.77)
Central defensive mainstay who had a dramatic dip in form last season, but came back strongly at the end of the campaign.

Dejan LOVREN (Cro)
Age 21 (05.07.89)
Central defender who did reasonably well in his first full season in France, but must add steel to his game.

Timothee KOLODZIEJCZAK
Age 19 (01.10.91)
Left-back who has risen through the French international age groups, but yet to make a breakthrough at club level.

John MENSAH (Gha)
Age 28 (29.11.82)
Injury-prone central defender who returns to Lyon this season after two campaigns in England with Sunderland.

Anthony REVEILLERE
Age 31 (10.11.79)
Right-back who can unsettle attackers and also get down the line when the chance arises.

Plus: Sebastien **FAURE** (Age 20, 03.01.91), Thomas **FONTAINE** (Age 20, 08.05.91), Lamine **GASSAMA** (Age 21, 20.10.89)

TACTICS

New coach Garde will be looking to add some youthful vigour and adventure to a side that seemed too concerned with not conceding goals last season. If Gourcuff can get back to his majestic best, Garde will have a classy playmaker around which he can create a much more adventurous team.

4-3-3

MIDFIELDERS

EDERSON (Bra)
Age 25 (13.01.86)
Suffered with injuries last season, but came back strongly to claim a starting spot at the end of the campaign.

Maxime GONALONS
Age 22 (10.03.89)
The defensive midfielder enjoyed a breakthrough season last time out and made 23 league appearances.

Yoann GOURCUFF
Age 25 (11.07.86)
Endured a nightmare first season following his big-money move from Bordeaux last summer. However, his talent isn't in doubt.

Kim KALLSTROM (Swe)
Age 28 (24.08.82)
Long-serving, willing worker who does the hard yards without complaint.

MICHEL BASTOS (Bra)
Age 27 (02.08.83)
Despite talk that he would be leaving for Juventus, the left-winger or full-back remains with the club – for now.

Miralem PJANIC (Bos)
Age 21 (02.04.90)
Arrived at Lyon to huge fanfare from Metz in 2008, but after a sparkling start he has struggled to establish himself.

Plus: Clement **GRENIER** (Age 20, 07.01.91), Enzo **REALE** (Age 20, 07.10.91)

FORWARDS

Jimmy BRIAND
Age 25 (02.08.85)
Arrived from Rennes a year ago with a big reputation, but has yet to fully justify his £5.3m price tag.

Bafetimbi GOMIS
Age 25 (06.08.85)
Took time to settle after signing from rivals Saint-Etienne in 2009, but had a fine season last term.

Alexandre LACAZETTE
Age 20 (28.05.91)
A local boy who scored regularly for the reserves before stepping up to senior level last season.

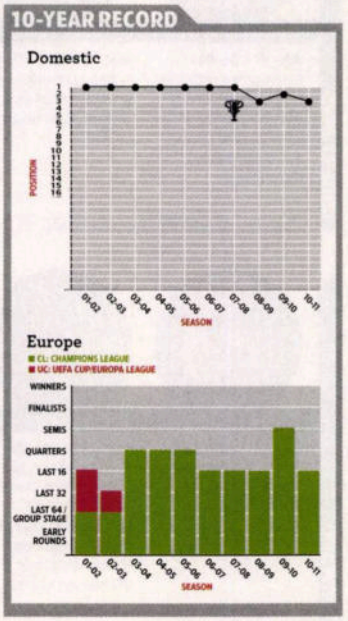
LISANDRO Lopez (Arg)
Age 28 (02.03.83)
A hard-worker who never stops trying and scores plenty of goals as just reward for his efforts.

Harry NOVILLO
Age 19 (28.05.92)
Former Under-17 international who can play wide or up front. Made his senior debut last season.

Jeremy PIED
Age 22 (23.02.89)
Winger who made his debut on the opening day of last season and went on to play 25 games.

Plus: Ishak **BELFODIL** (Age 19, 12.01.92)

10-YEAR RECORD



FRANCE
Marseille

THE COACH

Didier DESCHAMPS
Age 42 (15.10.68)
Former World Cup-winner who led Marseille to the 2010 French title, their first in 18 years. Has extended his contract until 2014.

(All ages as of 01.08.11)

GOALKEEPERS

Elinton ANDRADE (Bra)
Age 32 (30.03.79)
Born in Brazil, now with Portuguese citizenship, he arrived at Marseille in 2009 to play second fiddle to Mandanda.

Steve MANDANDA
Age 26 (28.03.85)
Second choice for France, club captain who didn't miss a league game last season.

Plus: Samir **KOUAKBI** (Age 21, 27.02.90)

Trying to cut costs without undermining success

Stade Velodrome...an intimidating arena holding just over 60,000

Marseille looked like the only serious rivals to Lille for the Ligue 1 title last season, but still ended up eight points behind the champions, while a spineless Champions League elimination at the hands of Manchester United showed just how far Didier Deschamps' outfit need to progress to be a real European force.

Things have changed behind the scenes with the arrival in June of a new president, Vincent Labrune, and an equally new way of thinking that insists the books need to be balanced.

Owner Margarita Louis-Dreyfus has injected around £18million to keep things on an even keel, but there will be no more "living beyond our means", as Labrune says. But can they improve on the field while cutting costs off it?

DEFENDERS

Cesar AZPILICUETA (Spa)
Age 21 (28.08.89)
Had an impressive first season in France last term until injury cut it short.

Souleymane DIAWARA (Sen)
Age 33 (24.12.78)
Good athlete and generally reliable central defender who's prone to the occasional lapse of concentration.

Rod FANNI
Age 29 (06.12.81)
Right-back who is on the fringes of the international scene. Arrived from Rennes in December.

Stephane MBIA (Cam)
Age 25 (20.05.86)
Prefers to play in midfield, but more often used as a central defender by Deschamps.

Jeremy MOREL
Age 27 (02.04.84)
Consistent left-back who spent nine years with Lorient before being signed to replace Milan-bound Taye Taiwo.

Nicolas NKOULOU (Cam)
Age 21 (27.03.90)
Signed for the club in June after a spell with Monaco, who were relegated from the top flight at the end of last season.

Plus: Cedric **D'ULIVO** (Age 21, 29.08.89), **HILTON** (Bra; Age 33, 13.09.77), Pape **M'BOW** (Age 23, 22.05.88)

TACTICS

You never sensed last season that Deschamps had worked out what his best formation was. With Gignac and Brandao mostly ineffective up front, he was forced to rely on Remy for some punch – and with his creative midfield talents out of sorts there was never a regular supply line.

4-3-3

MIDFIELDERS

Benoit CHEYROU
Age (03.05.81)
Discreet but effective, a decent playmaker who often finds the killer pass to create opportunities for the strikers.

Edouard CISSE
Age 33 (30.03.78)
A steadying influence since arriving from Turkish outfit Besiktas in 2009.

Alou DIARRA
Age 30 (15.07.81)
National captain who was signed from Bordeaux to add some extra steel to the back line.

Charles KABORE (BuF)
Age 23 (09.02.88)
A strong and committed player with no little skill who has established himself as a regular first choice.

Alexander N'DOUMBOU (Gab)
Age 19 (04.01.92)
Captained Marseille to the national Under-17 title in 2009. Plays on the flank.

Mathieu VALBUENA
Age 26 (20.09.84)
Diminutive, but dynamic and destructive, he is a crowd favourite because he always gives his all.

Plus: Fabrice **ABRIEL** (Age 32, 06.07.79), Kevin **OSEI** (Gha; Age 20, 26.03.91)

FORWARDS

Morgan AMALFITANO
Age 26 (20.03.85)
Joined this summer when his contract expired at Lorient.

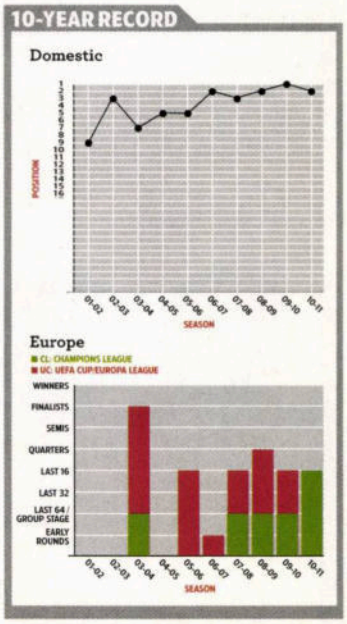
Andre AYEW (Gha)
Age 21 (17.12.89)
Born in France, but a Ghana international, he is the son of African legend Abedi Pele and was voted Marseille's player of the season last term.

Jordan AYEW (Gha)
Age 20 (11.09.91)
The younger brother of Andre, he has already made quite an impression with his 22 appearances last season.

Andre-Pierre GIGNAC
Age 25 (05.12.85)
Arrived from Toulouse in 2010 with a big reputation as a bruising goalscorer, but has yet to fully justify all the hype.

Loic REMY
Age 24 (02.01.87)
An elegant striker with a great eye for goal. Scored 15 times last season and was by some distance the club's best poacher.

10-YEAR RECORD



Last season's surprises could struggle

Key dates

Season starts
August 5, 2011
Winter break
December 17, 2011 to January 19, 2012
Season ends
May 5, 2012

Despite seeing their side claim fourth spot behind **Borussia Dortmund**, **Bayer Leverkusen** and **Bayern Munich** last season – the club's best finish for 23 years – only the most optimistic **Hanover** fan will be expecting more of the same in this term's Bundesliga campaign.

Many of the Lower Saxony side's wins were close affairs and, although coach Mirko Slomka is to be congratulated on building such a tight-knit unit, a mid-table finish and an extended run in the Europa League will probably be the best those supporters can hope for. The squad has been boosted by the arrival of Schalke left-back Christian Pander, but reserve goalkeeper Florian Fromlowitz and striker DaMarcus Beasley have both moved on (to Duisburg and Mexican side Puebla, respectively).

Realism suggests that **Mainz** will also find it extremely difficult to replicate last season's form, which saw them finish fifth to earn a Europa League spot. Many of Thomas Tuchel's key players were loanees and the likes of Lewis Holtby and Christian Fuchs (both Schalke), Andre Schurrle (Leverkusen) and Malik Fathi (Spartak Moscow) will be a tough act to follow. The only new recruits so far are striker Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting from Hamburg and midfielder Nicolai Muller from Greuther Furth.

Nuremberg are another side who, having punched above their weight to finish a creditable sixth last term, have lost a number of influential players. Long-serving centre-back and skipper Andreas Wolf has moved on to Werder Bremen, exciting midfield talents Ilkay Gundogan and Mehmet Ekici have joined Dortmund and Bayern respectively, and loan striker Julian Schieber has returned to Stuttgart. As a result, coach Dieter Hecking will have to rely heavily on his youth set-up, the most promising examples being centre-back Philipp Wollscheid and attacking all-rounder Julian Weissmeier.

Finishing seventh was a more than acceptable return for **Kaiserslautern** after four seasons outside the top flight. They too have been forced to rejig their squad after the loss of striker Srdjan Lakic to Wolfsburg on a free and the return of promising young Czech loanee Jan Moravek to Schalke. In a busy pre-season, coach Marco Kurz has recruited midfielders Kostas Fortounis from Asteras Tripolis in Greece, Gil Vermouth of Israel's Hapoel Tel Aviv and Olcay Sahan of Duisburg. Leverkusen striker Richard Sukuta-Pasu, who spent last season on loan at St Pauli, has also arrived.

New director of sport Frank Arnesen has made it his priority to rejuvenate an ageing **Hamburg** squad by culling high-paid veterans such as Ruud Van Nistelrooy and Joris Mathijsen, who have both joined Malaga, and Ze Roberto, who was not offered a new contract and signed for Qatar's Al Gharafa, and replacing them with a new generation. Previously the academy chief at Chelsea, Arnesen did much of his summer shopping at the London club, bringing in England Under-21 captain Michael Mancienne, Italian midfielder Jacopo Sala and Turkish striker Gokhan Tore from the Premier League club.

Rising star...Nuremberg's Wollscheid (right)

Arnesen's trump card, however, could well be the appointment as coach of former Nuremberg boss Michael Oenning, a man who has vast experience of working with, and bringing along, young players.

Following the departure of coach Robin Dutt to Leverkusen this summer, the new man in charge of **Freiburg** is former youth and reserve team coach Marcus Sorg. Goalkeeper Daniel Batz (Nuremberg), defender Beg Ferati (Basle) and striker Garra Dembele (Levski Sofia) have all been picked up in the close season, but if their talismanic top scorer Papiss Cisse moves on – as seems extremely likely – Sorg's side may struggle for goals.

After a fine run during the spring saved them from a relegation scrap, **Cologne** will also start the season with a new man at the helm in former Copenhagen coach Stale Solbakken, whose primary target will be European qualification. Fabrice Ehret (Evian), Thomas Kessler (loaned to Eintracht Frankfurt), Mato Jajalo (returned to Siena) and Taner Yalcin (loaned to Istanbul BB) have all left the club, so a few new recruits to play alongside Podolski and company will be an urgent priority. The only new arrival so far coming in the shape of talented Albanian midfielder Odise

Inspirational...Hamburg coach Michael Oenning

GERMANY

New target...Schalke's Raul (left) and Howedes

Roshi from Flamurtari Vlore.

Hoffenheim may have a mega-rich benefactor in the shape of software entrepreneur Dietmar Hopp, but on the pitch they remain infuriatingly inconsistent and prone to a post-Christmas dip in form. Following the disappointing six-month reign of Marco Pezzaiuoli, former St Pauli boss Holger Stanislawski has taken over as coach and brought in Stuttgart striker Sven Schipplock, while saying goodbye to midfielder David Alaba, who returns to Bayern Munich after his loan, and goalkeeper Ramazan Ozcan, who has been picked up by Ingolstadt. After two successive mid-table finishes, a push for European qualification is the minimum requirement.

While **Stuttgart** may have plenty of momentum after surging away from the relegation zone in the second-half of last season, the club are not in good health financially and recently posted their first accounting loss in seven years. Vital to coach Bruno Labbadia's aim of a top-six berth will be the form of Austria international attacker Martin Harnik, who forced himself to the top of the team's pecking order with some impressive displays last season. Newcomers include midfielders William Kvist from Copenhagen and Augsburg's Ibrahima Traore.

Despite flirting with relegation last season, **Werder Bremen** continue to give their support to long-serving coach Thomas Schaaf. The man who led them to the Bundesliga title in 2004, as well as two runners-up spots in 2006 and 2008, has had some wretched luck with injuries over the past 12 months – a curse that continued into the summer when Peru striker Claudio Pizarro damaged knee ligaments in a Copa America warm-up game.

On the plus side, the £4.5million spent on Bayern Munich's Mehmet Ekici looks good value and the midfield schemer will be joined for the new season by Schalke midfielder Lukas Schmitz and Tom Trybull from Hansa Rostock. Among those leaving are Torsten Frings, who joins MLS club Toronto and Petri Pasanen, who has signed for Salzburg in Austria.

Don't be fooled by **Schalke**'s recent knockout exploits in winning the German Cup and reaching the last-four of the Champions League. A mark of a truly good team is what it achieves over the long haul and in the Bundesliga last season the 2010 runners-up were found sadly wanting, finishing an abject 14th.

The sale of goalkeeper Manuel Neuer to Bayern has had some predicting a further slump, but that is to ignore the Gelsenkirchen side's many assets: the tactical know-how of coach Ralf Rangnick, the goals of the evergreen Raul and their array of youthful promise – especially central defender Benedikt Howedes, forward Julian Draxler and attacking midfielder Lewis Holtby, who has returned after loan stints at Bochum and Mainz. All will be hoping to prove that last season was no more than an unfortunate blip.

After leading **Wolfsburg** to a sensational league title in 2009, and then returning last spring to lead the club away from the relegation precipice, Felix Magath has the reputation among *Die Wolfe* fans as something of a miracle worker. But even "Magath the Magician" might find it a little too much to turn his charges into title contenders. Nevertheless, he is planning a root-and-branch remodelling of the squad - with wayward Brazilian playmaker Diego one of the first he would like to move out.

Borussia Monchengladbach will enter the season on a high after a dramatic escape from relegation. Firmly rooted to the bottom of the table for much of the season, they picked up 26 points after the winter break and then saved their skins by beating Bochum in a play-off. With eternally dissatisfied Swiss coach Lucien Favre driving them on for the new campaign, the storm clouds will hopefully have disappeared for good.

Just a year after relegation, **Hertha Berlin** have made a swift return to the top flight as second division champions, Despite the insistence of general manager Michael Preetz that they will be happy just to stay out of the relegation bearpit, the Berliners are an ambitious outfit and will be looking for a top-half finish.

Austrian ace... Stuttgart's Harnik

One of their new recruits is keeper Thomas Kraft who will be hoping to rebuild his reputation after a torrid spring between the sticks for Bayern.

Competing in the Bundesliga for the first time in their history, **Augsburg** will have only one target for the season: survival. For all the spirit and togetherness instilled in the team by Dutch coach Jos Luhukay, an annual budget of just £25m does not go far in the German top flight and, whichever way you cut it, they lack individual class. There are two reasons to hope, though: the wiles of Angolan top scorer Nando Rafael and the atmosphere generated at their new stadium, the Impuls-Arena.

Nick Bidwell

Top class... Neuer

SIGNING OF THE SUMMER
MANUEL NEUER
(Bayern Munich)
Although a section of Bayern supporters initially reacted with anger and disgust when they heard that their club had designs on the Schalke and Germany keeper, the decision makers in Munich held firm – and no one at the Allianz-Arena will be complaining this season if they see the £15million signing performing his usual heroics between the posts.

GERMANY

Bayern Munich

THE COACH

Jupp HEYNCKES
Age 66 (09.05.45)
West Germany and Borussia M'gladbach star of the 1970s in his third stint in charge of Bayern.

(All ages as of 01.08.11)

Another season without a trophy won't be tolerated

Monument to success...but – Bayern need the good times back at the Allianz Arena

Proud of their 22 Bundesliga titles and four European Cup/Champions League crowns, Bayern are an extraordinary entity. Organised as an *aktiengesellschaft* (a company owned by its shareholders) – where the amateur club owns the bulk of the equity (84.1 per cent) and external investors hold the remainder (Adidas have a 9.4 per cent stake, while Audi hold 6.5) – Bayern combine economic realism with cutting-edge financial management.

But it is not all pinstripes and BlackBerrys. Traditions are sacred and former stars are in all the positions of power: Uli Hoeness as president, Karl-Heinz Rummenigge as chairman and Christian Nerlinger as director of sport. Success is demanded and, after a blank last term, the heat is on for 2011-12.

GOALKEEPERS

Hans-Jorg BUTT
Age 37 (28.05.74)
Dropped by Van Gaal halfway through last season.

Manuel NEUER
Age 25 (27.03.86)
The best No1 in Germany. Signed from hometown club Schalke in a £22.5m deal.

Plus: Maximilian **RIEDMULLER** (Age 23, 04.01.88)

DEFENDERS

Holger BADSTUBER
Age 22 (13.03.89)
Homegrown left-back or central defender, established in the senior side in the 2009-10 season.

Jerome BOATENG
Age 22 (03.09.88)
Signed for £12m in July after one injury-hit season in England with Manchester City.

BRENO (Bra)
Age 21 (13.10.89)
Since joining in 2008, has not come close to his star-to-be billing at Sao Paulo.

Diego CONTENTO
Age 21 (01.05.90)
Another youth-team graduate, an effective left-back although lacking in polish.

Philipp LAHM
Age 27 (11.11.83)
Dynamic, skilful and poised, the club captain is one of the world's best full-backs.

RAFINHA (Bra)
Age 25 (07.09.85)
Swashbuckling right-back signed from Genoa, but self-discipline is not his strong point.

Plus: Daniel **VAN BUYTEN** (Blg; Age 33, 07.02.78)

TACTICS

As comfortable with the 4-2-3-1 of his predecessor Louis Van Gaal as he is with 4-4-2, Heynckes must first fashion a more solid defensive base – so greater stress will be put on winning individual duels. Up top, Gomez, Muller, Robben and Ribery will have the freedom they need, but they must still do their share of the donkey work.

4-2-3-1

MIDFIELDERS

Toni KROOS
Age 21 (04.01.90)
Germany play him sitting deep, while Bayern prefer to use him out wide or as a playmaker.

LUIZ GUSTAVO (Bra)
Age 23 (23.07.87)
Enforcer signed from Hoffenheim for £15m in January.

Danijel PRANJIC (Cro)
Age 29 (02.12.81)
Has struggled for consistency, playing at wing-back or full-back, since arriving in 2009 from Heerenveen.

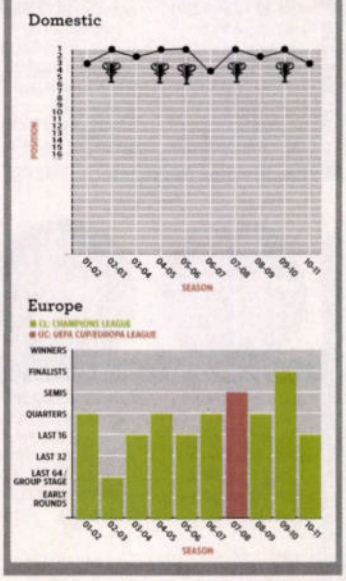
Franck RIBERY (Fra)
Age 27 (07.09.83)
Wing wizard who desperately needs a lift after a sex scandal and his role in France's World Cup mutiny.

Bastian SCHWEINSTEIGER
Age 26 (01.08.84)
Switched by Van Gaal from the right flank to the centre – which was a masterstroke.

Anatoliy TYMOSHCHUK (Ukr)
Age 32 (30.03.79)
The holding player is no technical wizard, but he is full of industry and has the ability to plug gaps.

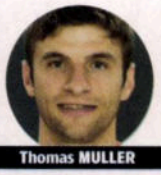
Plus: Emre **CAN** (Age 17, 12.01.94)

10-YEAR RECORD



FORWARDS

Mario GOMEZ
Age 26 (10.07.85)
The powerfully-built ex-Stuttgart striker was the Bundesliga's top scorer last term with 28 goals.



Thomas MULLER
Age 21 (13.09.89)
Able to operate anywhere in the attacking third, he remains very level-headed.

Ivica OLIC (Cro)
Age 31 (14.09.79)
All-action front runner back in the fray after missing most of last term with damaged knee ligaments.

Nils PETERSEN
Age 22 (06.12.88)
Hit 25 goals for second-tier Energie Cottbus last term as the division's leading marksman.

Arjen ROBBEN (Hol)
Age 27 (23.01.84)
If only the winger was not so fragile physically. Bayern are a different team with him on board.

Takashi USAMI (Jap)
Age 19 (06.05.92)
On loan for the season from Gamba Osaka, he has pace, invention and is a goal threat.

Plus: Deniz **MUJIC** (Age 20, 07.08.90), Saer **SENE** (Fra; Age 24, 04.11.86)

GERMANY

Borussia Dortmund

THE COACH

Jurgen KLOPP
Age 44 (16.06.67)
Different breed entirely from ultra-authoritarian, old-school German coach. Turned club from stragglers into title winners in three years.

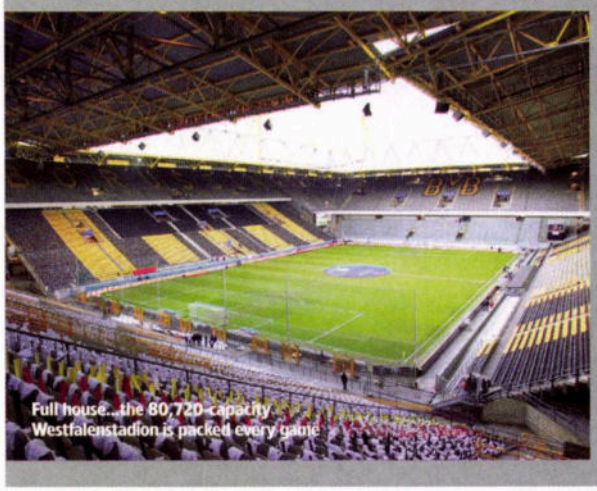
(All ages as of 01.08.11)

GOALKEEPERS

Mitchell LANGERAK (Aus)
Age 22 (22.08.88)
Arrived from Melbourne Victory last summer. Made Bundesliga debut in 3-1 win at Bayern Munich in February.

Roman WEIDENFELLER
Age 30 (06.08.80)
Reliable first-choice and club vice-captain. Came to prominence as a teenager at Kaiserslautern.

Cautious Dortmunders still treading softly



Full house...the 80,720-capacity Westfalenstadion is packed every game

Four-times Bundesliga champions – in 1995, 1996, 2002 and 2011 – and Champions League victors in 1997, Dortmund are the best-supported club in Germany, with more than 80,000 fans packing the Westfalenstadion every other week.

In 2000 they became the first – and so far only – Bundesliga club to float on the stock exchange, though within five years they were hovering on the brink of bankruptcy, weighed down by debts of £125million. Thanks to a concerted austerity programme, some 80 per cent of those red numbers have been wiped away but, understandably caution still reigns, hence the rather moderate increase in budget for this season (£30m to £35m). Step by step is the mantra.

DEFENDERS

Mats HUMMELS
Age 22 (16.12.88)
One of the great mysteries of German football is what prompted Bayern Munich to offload this elegant centre-back three years ago.

Patrick OWOMOYELA
Age 31 (05.11.79)
Former international right-back who needs to regain sharpness after missing most of last term with an Achilles tendon injury.

Lukasz PISZCZEK (Pol)
Age 26 (03.06.85)
A revelation last season, combative spirit and overlapping ability have made him indispensable.

Felipe SANTANA (Bra)
Age 25 (17.03.86)
Centre-back who would be first choice in most German sides, but has Hummels and Subotic to contend with.

Marcel SCHMELZER
Age 23 (22.01.88)
Energetic left-back whose stock in trade are his non-stop forward sorties and utter selflessness.

Neven SUBOTIC (Ser)
Age 22 (10.12.88)
Highly-rated central defender who provides steel as well as the pre-match dressing room tunes.

Plus: Marc **HORNSCHUH** (Age 20, 02.03.91), Julian **KOCH** (Age 20, 11.11.90)

TACTICS

The essence of the Dortmund style is an aggressive, high-pressing game, married to lightning-quick transition from defence into attack. They are especially strong on the ball in the middle of the park, while Gotze and Grosskreutz run wide. But who will set the tempo now Nuri Sahin has gone to Real Madrid?

4-2-3-1

MIDFIELDERS

Sven BENDER
Age 22 (27.04.89)
Indefatigable and intelligent defensive midfielder whose twin Lars plays for Bayer Leverkusen. Won his first cap for Germany last season.

Jakub BLASZCZYKOWSKI (Pol)
Age 25 (14.12.89)
The experienced Poland international is always a handful with his tricks and energy, but composure in front of goal is not his forte.

Mario GOTZE
Age 19 (03.06.92)
This son of an information science professor at Dortmund University is simply the best creative talent in Germany right now.

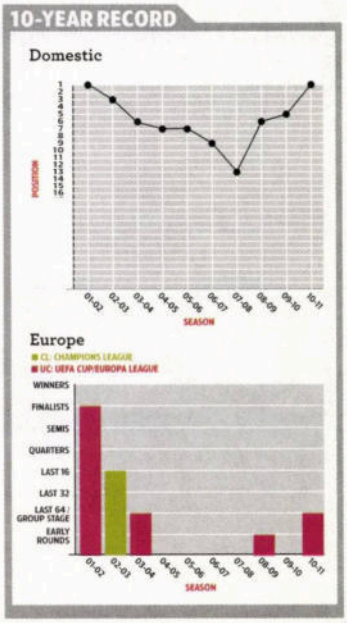
Kevin GROSSKREUTZ
Age 23 (19.07.88)
A local lad and dyed-in-the-wool supporter, the left-sided midfielder represents the team's emotional heartbeat.

Ilkay GUNDOGAN
Age 20 (24.10.90)
Versatile midfielder recently bought from Nuremberg for £3.5m. Can operate as a holding player or playmaker.

Sebastian KEHL
Age 31 (13.02.80)
Twice a member of Germany World Cup squads (2002 and 2006), he can play as a defensive midfielder or libero.

Plus: Marvin **BAKALORZ** (Age 21, 13.09.89), Antonio **DA SILVA** (Bra; age 33, 13.06.78), Chris **LOWE** (Age 22, 16.04.89)

10-YEAR RECORD



FORWARDS

Lucas BARRIOS (Par)
Age 26 (13.11.84)
His work ethic has improved by leaps and bounds since joining Dortmund from Chilean club Colo Colo in 2009.

Shinji KAGAWA (Jap)
Age 22 (13.02.80)
Was an instant hit on arriving in Germany a year ago, but missed the second half of the season with a broken foot.

Damien LE TALLEC (Fra)
Age 21 (19.04.90)
He is the younger brother of former Liverpool and current Auxerre striker Anthony Le Tallec.

Robert LEWANDOWSKI (Pol)
Age 22 (21.08.88)
A £4m acquisition from Lech Poznan in the summer of 2010, the deep-lying striker started slowly but has gradually come into his own.

Ivan PERISIC (Cro)
Age 22 (02.02.89)
Leading scorer in the Belgian League last term with 22 goals, he cost Borussia £5m this summer.

Mohamed ZIDAN (Egy)
Age 29 (11.12.81)
Signed from Hamburg in 2008, he also played under Klopp at Mainz.

GERMANY

Bayer Leverkusen

THE COACH

Robin DUTT

Age 46 (24.01.65)
Brought in the summer on the strength of his impressive work at overachieving Freiburg. Known for meticulous performance analysis.

(All ages as of 01.08.11)

GOALKEEPERS

Rene ADLER

Age 26 (15.01.85)
Had to undergo surgery after damaging a tendon in his right knee during pre-season.

Fabian GIEFER

Age 21 (17.05.90)
On the club's books since the age of 13, he made his first-team debut in November 2009.

Plus: David **YELLDELL** (USA; Age 29, 01.10.81)

Rhinelanders burning to bury the "eternal bridesmaids" tag

BayArena...home to more than 30,000 supporters

The Rhineland-based works team of the Bayer pharmaceutical conglomerate, Leverkusen are often mocked by fans of other sides as a "plastic club", one which lacks the passionate support of the more traditional Bundesliga forces.

However, having first reached the German top flight in 1979, the *Wekself* (works eleven) are driven by the burning desire to finally bury their image as the eternal bridesmaids after finishing runners-up in the Bundesliga five times and ending up as beaten finalists in the 2002 Champions League – the campaign known locally as the "Treble horror" when they also lost in the German Cup Final and, with the Bundesliga in their grasp, lost two of their last three league games to be pipped by Borussia Dortmund.

DEFENDERS

Gonzalo CASTRO

Age 24 (11.06.87)
Attack-orientated right-back of Spanish parentage who can also play in midfield. European Under-21 champion with Germany in 2009.

Michal KADLEC (CzR)

Age 26 (13.12.84)
Resourceful and dynamic, the left-back is the son of former Czech Republic and Kaiserslautern sweeper Miroslav Kadlec.

Bastian OCZIPKA

Age 22 (12.01.89)
After three years on loan at Hansa Rostock and St Pauli, the attacking left-back has returned to Leverkusen.

Stefan REINARTZ

Age 22 (01.01.89)
Very much the unsung hero at the heart of the back four. The leader of the rearguard now that Finnish veteran Sami Hyypia has retired.

Daniel SCHWAAB

Age 22 (23.08.88)
Ex-Freiburg central defender or full-back who was a favourite of former Bayer coach Jupp Heynckes. A business studies undergraduate.

Omer TOPRAK

Age 21 (21.07.89)
A £2.6m purchase this summer from Freiburg, the central defender once almost lost his life in a karting accident.

Plus: Danny **DA COSTA** (Age 17, 13.07.93), Manuel **FRIEDRICH** (Age 31, 13.09.79)

TACTICS

Dutt is likely to use a 4-2-3-1 as his base formation, but aims to be in a position to ring tactical changes in the course of a game, one moment switching to a 4-4-2, the next in 4-1-4-1 mode. He does not want to put a brake on Leverkusen's attacking style, just make them a shade more pragmatic defensively.

4-2-3-1

MIDFIELDERS

Michael BALLACK

Age 34 (26.09.76)
The all-important question is how the often-injured former Germany captain will react after recently being dumped by Joachim Low.

Tranquillo BARNETTA (Swi)

Age 26 (22.05.85)
Left-sided player who has slipped a little in the Bayer pecking order. At the club for the past six years.

Lars BENDER

Age 22 (27.04.89)
Twin brother of Dortmund's Sven, he is a disciplined and athletic enforcer, selfless and with the ability to think on his feet.

RENATO AUGUSTO (Bra)

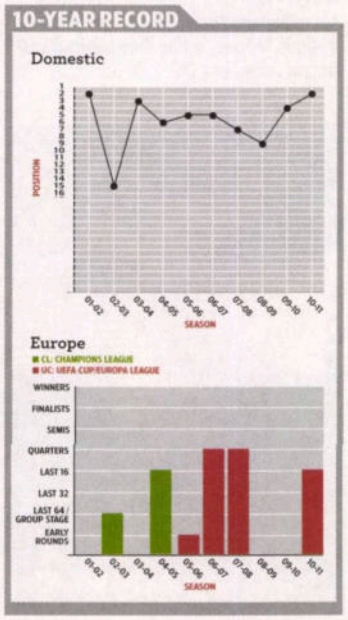
Age 23 (08.02.88)
Latest in a long line of Brazilians to play for Leverkusen, the refined ex-Flamengo star can always be relied on for ideas and precise passing.

Simon ROLFES

Age 29 (21.01.82)
Germany defensive midfielder full of grit, energy, awareness and good distribution. Missed most of the 2009-10 season with a knee injury.

Plus: Hanno **BALITSCH** (30, 02.01.81)

10-YEAR RECORD



FORWARDS

Karim BELLARABI

Age 21 (08.04.90)
The Germany Under-20 striker joined on a free this summer from third division side Eintracht Braunschweig.

Eren DERDIYOK (Swi)

Age 23 (12.06.88)
No question about his talent as a front runner or his ability to take chances, but sometimes needs to be more assertive.

Nicolai JORGENSEN (Den)

Age 20 (15.01.91)
Denmark Under-21 striker who can work the flanks or play through the middle. Signed from Danish second-tier side AB a year ago.

Stefan KIESSLING

Age 27 (25.01.84)
The all-action striker is a real handful when on top of his game, but was thrown out of sync last term by an ankle ligament injury.

Sidney SAM

Age 23 (31.01.88)
Of Nigerian descent, the diminutive winger can wreak havoc with his explosiveness and audacity. Formerly with Hamburg and Kaiserslautern.

Andre SCHURRLE

Age 20 (06.11.90)
Recently returned after a dazzling loan spell at Mainz. Scored his first senior goal for Germany against Uruguay in May.

GREECE

Super League sides shopping in the bargain basement

Best foot forward...PAOK keeper Kostas Chalkias clears from Panionios' Bosko Balaban

Key dates

Season starts
August 27, 2011
Season ends
May 2012

With a match-fixing scandal hanging over the domestic game, and financial problems plaguing the entire nation, this season's Greek Super League is struggling to create much excitement among fans.

"The financial crisis has touched everyone. We will look to adjust our budget and not to spend wastefully," says **Olympiakos** vice-president Yiannis Moralis, while **Panathinaikos**' acting president Dimitris Gontikas admits: "With no money coming in, we will have to replace our current top-tier players with cheaper ones. There is just no other way."

Helping hand... Scocco hopes his move will benefit cash-strapped AEK

And it's not just this season's Champions League entrants who are fearing the worst. **AEK Athens** are in no better shape and had to sell their star player, Argentinian striker Nacho Scocco, who brought in £2.5million to the cash-strapped club following his sale to Al Ain in the United Arab Emirates. The move also saved AEK £1.35m a year in wages.

"AEK gained a sizable amount of money from my transfer," says Scocco, who only six months ago was being courted by both Olympiakos and Panathinaikos. "I owe a lot to AEK so I wanted to help." Goalkeeper Sebastian Saja has also left, returning to Argentina and joining Racing Club.

AEK replaced Scocco with PAS Giannina striker Dimitris Sialmas and have also picked up Cameroonian forward Steve Leo Beleck on loan from Udinese. Defenders Sokratis Tsoukalas, Giannis Kontoes and Mavroudis Bougaidis all arrived on free transfers, from Palermo, Panionios and Aris Salonica respectively.

Olympiakos Volos, who will play in the Europa League this season, have hired Spanish coach Javi Garcia for their first continental campaign.

"I am proud to take part in an ambitious plan and I will give everything for Olympiakos Volos," says the former Cadiz boss, who has never worked outside his homeland before. "It is hard for a coach to leave his country, but the interest that the officials of this club have shown in me won me over."

Joining Olympiakos Volos' European adventure will be French midfielder Stephane Darbion, who arrived on a free transfer from Nantes.

Fellow Europa League entrants **PAOK** also have a new coach in Laszlo Boloni, with the former Romania, Sporting Lisbon and Standard Liege boss reportedly opting to join them after rejecting an offer to lead his former club Steaua Bucharest. Boloni says he intends to rejuvenate his squad and expects them to play more attractive football, but the only early acquisition was French midfielder Bertrand Robert on a free transfer from Panthrakikos.

Mexico striker Nery Castillo renewed his contract with **Aris** for another two seasons. He will be joined by French-Algerian forward Karim Soltani on a free transfer from Iraklis and forward Athanasios Kanoulas from lower-level side Anagennisi Artas.

Asteras Tripolis are another club to go Spanish, with Oscar Fernandez taking over from Pavlos Dermitzakis. Fernandez, in charge of Valencia's B team for the last five years, and who had a spell coaching the first team when Quique Sanchez Flores left, has added defender Athanasios Kostoulas from Xanthi.

Atromitos have been far busier, signing Argentinian midfielder Pitu from Iraklis, defender Kostas Giannoulis (Cologne), midfielder Georgios Makris (Kerkyra), Serbian midfielder Nikola Beljic and Croatian goalkeeper Velimir Radman (both Panserraikos) and defender Sokratis Fytanidis (Asteras Tripolis).

Of the other clubs scrambling around for cheap recruitments during the close season, **Ergotelis** picked up Nikolaos Katsikogeris from Platania, Rot-Weiss Oberhausen goalkeeper Soren Pirson and Serbian midfielder Borislav Jovanovic from Indjija, while **Kerkyra** grabbed Levadiakos midfielder Giorgos Barkoglou, goalkeeper Nikolaos Anastasopoulos from Asteras Tripolis and Omonia Nicosia's German defender Timo Wenzel.

Panionios signed defender Dimitrios Petkakis from Kavala and forward Giannis Loukinas of Rouf Athens, while forward Panagiotis Vlachodimos and Romanian midfielder Emil Dica joined **Skoda Xanthi** on frees from Stuttgart and CFR Cluj respectively. **Kavala**, who finished seventh last term have yet to add anyone to their squad.

For the promoted sides, **PAS Giannina**, back in the top flight for the first time in 34 seasons, signed Albanian defender Andi Lila from KF Tirana, and Diagoras duo goalkeeper Charalambos Tabasis and midfielder Fotis Georgiou. **Panetolikos**, who came straight back up after just one season in the second tier, brought in Senegalese forward Henri Camara from Atromitos. The 16th team to take part in the Super League is still to be decided by a First League play-off.

Lou Economopoulos

Following others...Serbia's Fejsa

SIGNING OF THE SUMMER
LJUBOMIR FEJSA (Olympiakos)
The 22-year-old Serb midfielder followed in the footsteps of illustrious fellow countrymen Predrag Djordjevic and Darko Kovacevic when he left Belgrade for the Greek champions this summer.

GREECE

Olympiakos

THE COACH

Ernesto VALVERDE (Spa)
Age 47 (09.02.64)
Calm and composed, he has led the club to two domestic crowns in as many years and was named coach of the year last season.

(All ages as of 01.08.11)

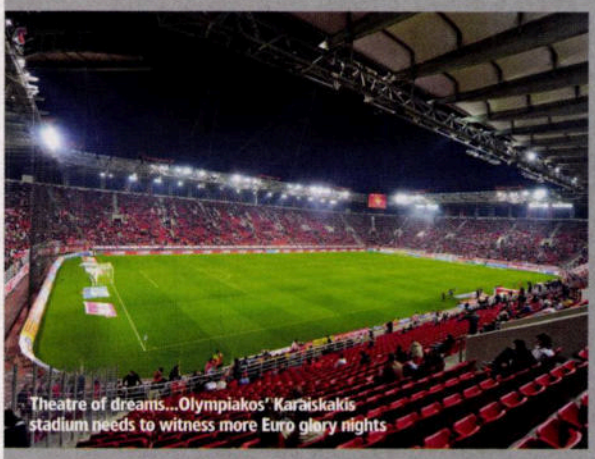
GOALKEEPERS

Franco COSTANZO (Arg)
Age 30 (05.09.80)
Joined on a free from Basle this summer to replace retired Antonis Nikopolidis.

Iosif DASKALAKIS
Age 28 (07.08.72)
Signed from Ergotelis, uses his height well to deal with crosses.

Plus: Balazs **MEGYERI** (Hun; Age 21, 31.03.90)

Big noise at home but a whimper in Europe



Theatre of dreams...Olympiakos' Karaiskakis stadium needs to witness more Euro glory nights

The financial crisis is forcing even the Greek champions to tighten their belt, and none of the big names that fans had hoped for from owner Vangelis Marinakis have materialised so far, with coach Ernesto Valverde only bringing in Argentinian goalkeeper Franco Costanzo, Spanish defender Ivan Marcano on loan from Villarreal and Serb midfielder Ljubomir Fejsa.

However, with all the Super League sides in the same boat, Valverde – whose squad has just six players aged over 30 – will most likely continue to dominate domestically. As for Europe, the club that has twice made it to the quarter-finals (1998-99 Champions League and 1992-93 European Cup-winners Cup) are not expected to raise eyebrows this season.

DEFENDERS

Jose HOLEBAS (Ger)
Age 27 (27.06.84)
Germany-born, he played in 31 games last season and is expected to be a regular again.

LEONARDO (Bra)
Age 25 (04.08.85)
Back in Athens after a season on loan with Brazil's Internacional, where he saw little action due to injury.

Ivan MARCANO (Spa)
Age 24 (23.06.87)
Ex-Spain Under-21 central defender or left-back. On loan from Villarreal, he has also played in La Liga for Getafe.

Olof MELLBERG (Swe)
Age 33 (03.09.77)
Sweden national team stalwart who will once again be a rock in Valverde's well-drilled defence.

Avraam PAPADOPOULOS
Age 26 (03.12.84)
Steady international defender who is given a lot of playing time, but prone to giving away free-kicks.

Vasilis TOROSIDIS
Age 26 (10.06.85)
Attack-minded international who picks up his share of yellow cards. Excellent crosser and good in the air.

Plus: Georgios **GALITSIOS** (Age 24. 06.07.86) Giannis **MANIATIS** (Age 24, 12.10.86), Giorgos **VALERIANOS** (Age 19, 14.02.92)

TACTICS

As a Spaniard, Valverde likes to use the system that dominates in La Liga and relies upon solid defence, the retention of possession for long periods and deadly counter-attacks. This relies heavily on the wide players Riera and Fetfatzidis providing effective service for those breaking forward.

4-2-3-1

MIDFIELDERS

Ljubomir FEJSA (Ser)
Age 22 (14.08.88)
Capped twice, he was signed from Serbian champions Partizan Belgrade for £2.7m in June.

Ioannis FETFATZIDIS
Age 20 (21.12.90)
The up-and-coming star who has already been capped by the national side.

David FUSTER (Spa)
Age 29 (03.02.82)
The club's second leading scorer with 12 goals last season, when played more minutes than anyone else in the league.

Moises HURTADO (Spa)
Age 30 (20.02.81)
Signed last year from Espanyol and reliable in the holding role.

Ariel IBAGAZA (Arg)
Age 34 (27.10.76)
Attacking midfielder with vast experience in Spain. Blessed with technique and vision.

Albert RIERA (Spa)
Age 29 (15.04.82)
Winger signed from Liverpool in 2010, and one of the highest-paid players in the club's history. Has 16 Spain caps.

Plus: **CHUMBINHO** (Bra; Age 24, 21.09.86), Giorgos **NIKLITSIOTIS** (Age 20, 23.03.91), Dennis **ROMMEDAHL** (Den; Age 32, 22.07.78)

FORWARDS

Matt DERBYSHIRE (Eng)
Age 25 (14.04.86)
A fans' favourite after scoring 11 goals in 26 game during his first season. Loaned to Birmingham City last term.

Rafik DJEBBOUR (Alg)
Age 27 (08.03.84)
The Algeria striker joined in mid-season from AEK Athens and scored seven times in 10 matches. Has a suspect temperament.

Kevin MIRALLAS (Blg)
Age 23 (05.10.87)
The Belgium star was the club's top scorer last season with 14 goals and is a fans' favourite for his determination.

Kostas MITROGLOU
Age 23 (12.03.88)
Went on loan mid-season to Panionios and returned with his confidence restored.

Krisztian NEMETH (Hun)
Age 22 (05.01.86)
On loan last season at Olympiakos Volos, he has returned with the aim of gaining a starting place.

Marko PANTELIC (Ser)
Age 32 (15.09.78)
Scored seven goals in 20 games last season and expected to get more playing time this term.

Plus: Petar **GRBIC** (Mne; Age 22, 07.08.88), Aleksandar **KATAI** (Ser; Age 20, 06.02.91)

10-YEAR RECORD

GREECE

Panathinaikos

THE COACH

Jesualdo FERREIRA (Por)
Age 65 (24.05.46)
Gained the respect of his players with systematic work, but is now being asked to produce a miracle with a depleted squad.

(All ages as of 01.08.11)

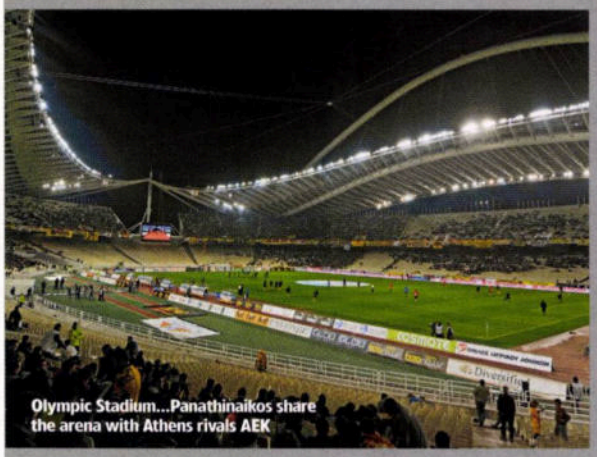
GOALKEEPERS

Stefanos KOTSOLIS
Age 32 (05.06.79)
Back with the club after a brief spell with Omonia Nicosia.

Alexandros TZORVAS
Age 28 (12.08.82)
Confident displays have made him first choice for both club and country.

Plus: Orestis **KARNEZIS** (Age 25, 11.07.85)

Cash-strapped club put accent on lesser lights



Olympic Stadium...Panathinaikos share the arena with Athens rivals AEK

The fear of bankruptcy has forced the club to offload many of its biggest names, with those that remain asked to take pay cuts of up to 50 per cent. But while this may make some supporters pessimistic about the future, others feel even with top-notch players Panathinaikos were a poor second to Olympiakos last season and perhaps with lesser-known players the incentive will be greater.

Veteran coach Jesualdo Ferreira will have a limited budget to work with and has a mandate to create a fast, youthful side of ambitious, up-and-coming players.

As for Europe, the days when the club reached the Final of the European Cup (losing to Ajax at Wembley in 1971) and semi-finals of the 1985 and 1996 Champions League are just history.

DEFENDERS

Mattias BJARSMYR (Swe)
Age 25 (03.01.86)
On loan last season at Rosenborg, he has returned with the intention of claiming a starting place.

Giorgos IOANNIDIS
Age 23 (04.05.88)
Impressed Ferreira in his 10 appearances as a sub last season.

Cedric KANTE (Mli)
Age 31 (06.07.79)
Solid, reliable player who has a vital role in the centre of the back four.

Josu SARRIEGI (Spa)
Age 32 (19.01.79)
Useful coming off the bench to tighten up the defence and has impressive work rate.

Nikos SPYROPOULOS
Age 27 (10.10.83)
Solid at the back, he also causes problems at the other end with long-range shooting and aerial prowess.

Loukas VYNTRA
Age 30 (05.02.81)
International who is good in the tackle and rarely gives away free-kicks.

TACTICS

Ferreira likes his sides to attack down the flanks, and a plethora of experienced and talented midfield players will provide plenty of support for the lone striker up front. However, the loss of France international striker Djibril Cisse to Lazio will not make things any easier for the coach this term.

4-5-1

MIDFIELDERS

Lazaros CHRISTODOULOPOULOS
Age 24 (19.12.86)
Often used as a sub last season, he lifted the side with his willing running and shooting prowess.

Giorgos KARAGOUNIS
Age 34 (06.03.77)
Winding down his outstanding career with Panathinaikos and the national side, but still has a spark.

Kostas KATSOURANIS
Age 32 (21.06.79)
Long-serving Pana and Greece player who is always willing to join the attack.

Sebastian LETO (Arg)
Age 24 (30.08.86)
The playmaker and entertainer-in-chief with his dribbling and quick moves.

Sotiris NINIS
Age 21 (03.04.90)
The "boy wonder" had a bit of a slump last season but is always dangerous in the build-up in and around the box.

SIMAO (Moz)
Age 22 (23.07.88)
Tackles back well and often stifles breakaways.

Plus: Elini **DIMOUTSOS** (Age 23, 18.06.88), Sotiris **LEONTIOU** (Age 26, 17.07.84), Stergos **MARINOS** (Age 23, 17.09.87)

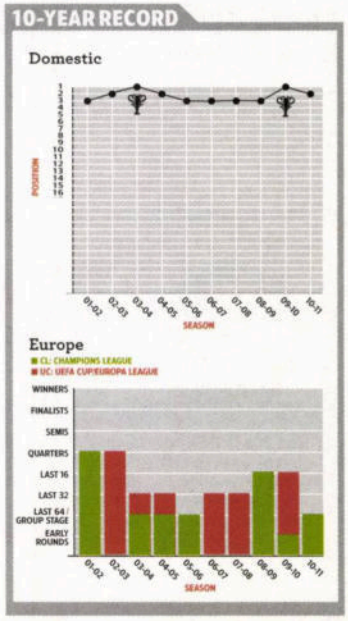
FORWARDS

CLEYTON
Age 28 (08.03.83)
Brazil-born, he gained Greek citizenship in 2009 after spending seven years in the country. Signed from Larissa in 2008.

Charis MAVRIAS
Age 17 (21.02.94)
Right-winger who was the second-youngest Champions League debutant last year, against Rubin Kazan. Capped by Greece at Under-17 and Under-19 level.

Antonis PETROPOULOS
Age 25 (28.01.86)
After a brief loan period in Crete, he returns to help a squad who have a lack of striking depth.

10-YEAR RECORD



HOLLAND

Pressure on Rutten to drag PSV back to top table

Photo: www.proshots.nl

New boy...PSV's Wijnaldum (in red) takes on city rivals FC Eindhoven in a pre-season friendly

Key dates

Season starts
August 5, 2011
Winter break
December 19, 2011 to January 19, 2012
Season ends
June 6, 2012

Having gone head-to-head for the Eredivisie title on the final day of last season, **Ajax** and **Twente** will again be big favourites to collect silverware during this campaign.

Their only likely challengers will be **PSV**, who finished third last term. Without the national crown since 2008, the pressure will increase on coach Fred Rutten, who surprisingly kept his job despite fierce criticism, to do better. The Eindhoven club have been helped by their local council, who have bought their stadium and training complex. In return, PSV will pay rent for the next 40 years, but the deal means the 18-times champions have money available to strengthen their squad.

Belgian winger Dries Martens and Holland midfielder Kevin Strootman, both from Utrecht, and Feyenoord's Georginio Wijnaldum have already been signed up, but it would do PSV no harm whatsoever to find a decent striker. Leaving are winger Balasz Dzsudzsak (to Russian club Anzhi Machakchala), reserve Danny Koevermans (Toronto), Marcus Berg (back to Hamburg after a disappointing loan spell) and Jonathan Reis (last year's main striker until he suffered an horrific knee injury and now walking out for free). The board hope highly paid skipper Orlando Engelaar, who was the fans' scapegoat last season, will find another club in order to raise more cash.

AZ, fourth last year, have lost key players Stijn Schaars (Sporting Lisbon), Kolbeinn Sigthorsson (Ajax) and Mexican Hector Moreno (Espanyol), while several others, such as the expensive Argentinian goalkeeper Sergio Romero, will probably follow. So far only striker Ruud Boymans (VVV) has come in as AZ continue to suffer from their financial troubles of a few years ago. However, coach Gertjan Verbeek is a master at creating a mentally and physically strong team so the Alkmaar club ought to remain a contender for a Europa League ticket.

Den Haag, who surprisingly clinched the last Europa League spot after the play-offs, are in danger of collapse. Inspirational coach John Van den Brom has abandoned ship to join his first love Vitesse, while Russian striker Dmitry Bulykin (back to Anderlecht after a loan spell) and Slovakian winger Frantisek Kubik (Kuban Krasnodar) have also left. Last year's assistant Maurice Steijn has been put in charge but he is aware that players such as Timothy Derijck, Jens Toornstra, Lex Immers and Wesley Verhoek are likely to be sold before the start of the season. So far, second division players Paul Mulders, Wouter De Vogel and Marc Hocher, along with Slovakia defender Filip Luksik, are the only new arrivals.

Groningen, who missed out on the Europa League after losing on penalties to Den Haag, have had to reshuffle their defence after skipper Andreas Granqvist (Genoa) and left-back Fredrik Stenman (Club Brugge) moved on. Swede Emil Johansson (Molde) and Kees Kwakman (Augsburg) are the new boys. Providing winger Zoran Tosic and striker Tim Matavz stay, Groningen are serious candidates for European football.

Whether **Feyenoord** can wash away last season's shameful 10th place depends on the help of extended investors. Despite young striker Luc Castaignos' departure to Inter, money remains tight in Rotterdam and coach Mario Been quit during the pre-season build-up after the first-team squad were reported to have lost faith in his ability. New coach Ronald Koeman could face another difficult campaign.

Heerenveen have stuck with coach Ron Jans, despite a mediocre performance and his falling out with striker Bas Dost, while it will be interesting to see how **Utrecht** invest the money from the sales of Strootman, Mertens and Ricky Van Wolfswinkel (Sporting Lisbon). Rival clubs should be aware that Utrecht will be knocking on their door. Utrecht owner Frans van Seumeren is demanding a Europa League play-off spot and with the right investment they are serious candidates.

Dark horses **Roda** and **Heracles**, who reached the play-offs last term, have held on to key players and will again be battling for European football, while **Vitesse**, who say they will be champions within three years, are also aiming for a Europa League spot – and providing the millions of Georgian owner Merab Jordania are well spent, new coach Van den Brom could repeat his performance at Den Haag last season.

Cash-stripped **NAC Breda** and **NEC Nijmegen**, who have lost the league's top scorer Bjorn Vleminckx to Club Brugge, look set for a mid-table spot.

Down at the bottom, new coaches Glen De Boeck at **VVV**, Andries Ulderink of **De Graafschap** and **Excelsior**'s John Lammers will all be happy just to avoid relegation. The latter will depend on the leftovers of satellite club Feyenoord. A remarkable transfer is that of Excelsior's Roland Bergkamp, who follows his second cousin Dennis overseas. However, his destination isn't Arsenal but Brighton.

Promoted **RKC Waalwijk** are the main candidate to drop, just as they did two seasons ago. The club with the lowest budget have no money to strengthen their squad.

Klaas-Jan Droppert

Photo: www.proshots.nl

Champion move...Janssen

SIGNING OF THE SUMMER
THEO JANSSEN (Ajax)
Having been voted last season's Eredivise player of the season, the 29-year-old midfielder swapped runners-up Twente for the side who pipped them to the title.

HOLLAND

Ajax

THE COACH

Frank DE BOER
Age 41 (15.05.70)
Former defender who took over from Martin Jol in mid-season. Stayed calm during the club's turmoil and led them to the title.

(All ages as of 01.08.11)

GOALKEEPERS

Maarten STEKELENBURG
Age 28 (22.09.82)
Oranje star attracting envious glances from Europe's biggest clubs. Team captain.

Kenneth VERMEER
Age 25 (10.01.86)
Talented understudy who sometimes gives the impression that he prefers the bench to a starting place at another club.

Plus: Jeroen **VERHOEVEN** (Age 31, 30.04.80)

De Boer looks to build on smoother Amsterdam waters

Road to glory...the Amsterdam Arena will witness Champions League football again this season

Last year's Eredivisie triumph ended a seven-year title drought for Holland's most successful club side. But the drive to regain former glories also had its casualties at the home of the four-times European champions. Martin Jol quit as coach in December following a run of poor results, while chairman Uri Coronel and managing director Rick Van den Boog both left their posts.

With Ajax legend Johan Cruyff now installed on the board, coach Frank De Boer will hope to build on last season's success without losing too many of his young stars, such as the eye-catching Danish attacking midfielder Christian Eriksen. He has also made two key signings in the shape of Theo Janssen and Kolbeinn Sigthorsson.

DEFENDERS

Toby ALDERWEIRELD
Age 22 (02.03.89)
Central defender who can also play at right-back. Rose through the youth ranks and blossomed under De Boer.

Daley BLIND
Age 21 (09.03.90)
Son of former Ajax star and current assistant trainer Danny Blind. Will be competing with Boilesen for the left-back berth.

Nicolai BOILESEN
Age 19 (16.02.92)
Attacking left-back who joined the Ajax academy despite interest from the likes of Manchester United. Made debut towards the end of last season.

Andre OOIJER
Age 37 (11.07.74)
Vastly experienced Holland centre-back who made his name with PSV. Played in England for Blackburn Rovers.

Gregory VAN DER WIEL
Age 23 (03.02.88)
Quick right-back and Dutch young player of the year in 2010. Looking to bounce back from a season marred by fatigue.

Jan VERTONGHEN
Age 24 (24.04.87)
A commanding central defender with a powerful shot, he has been linked with a move to Arsenal.

Plus: Dico **KOPPERS** (Age 19, 31.01.92), Bruno **SILVA** (Uru; Age 31, 29.03.80)

TACTICS

De Boer, a firm advocate of Ajax's traditional passing game, employs a 4-3-3 system, bolstered by attacking wing-backs, with Erikssen and Janssen pulling the strings in midfield. The arrival of Sigthorsson as a focal point up front will hopefully bring the best out of their talented wide men.

4-3-3

MIDFIELDERS

Vurnon ANITA
Age 22 (04.04.89)
Diminutive but talented, he can play on either flank. Full international.

Eyong ENOH (Cam)
Age 25 (23.03.86)
Strong, hard-working ball-winner who has become a hit after signing from South African side Ajax Cape Town in 2008.

Christian ERIKSEN
Age 19 (14.02.92)
Club's brightest talent and another linked with a move away. His speed and dribbling is reminiscent of Michael Laudrup.

Theo JANSSEN
Age 29 (27.07.81)
Signed from Twente this summer, he has thrown off his "bad-boy" image to become one of the Eredivisie's top stars.

Nicolas LODEIRO (Uru)
Age 22 (21.03.89)
Signed from Nacional in January 2010 but missed all of last season with a knee injury picked up at the 2010 World Cup.

Mats RITS (Blg)
Age 18 (18.07.93)
Snapped up from Beerschot this summer despite overtures from Real Madrid.

Plus: Thulani **SERERO** (SAf; Age 21, 11.04.90), Rodney **SNEIJDER** (Age 20, 31.03.91)

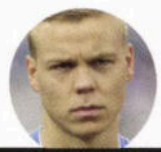
FORWARDS

Derk BOERRIGTER
Age 24 (16.10.86)
Left-winger who failed to make the grade at Ajax first time around. Rejoined in the summer after eye-catching spells at Zwolle and RKC.

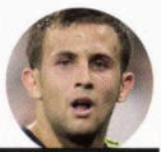
Siem DE JONG
Age 22 (28.01.89)
Dynamic midfielder who can also play up front or just off the main striker. Scored twice in last season's title-clinching win over Twente.

Lorenzo EBECILIO
Age 19 (24.09.91)
Left-winger who overcame a heart attack at the age of 14 to join the Ajax academy. Made his debut in De Boer's first game in charge.

Araz OZBILIZ (Tur)
Age 21 (09.03.90)
Promising left-footed right-winger of Turkish-Armenian descent and another product of the club's youth scheme.



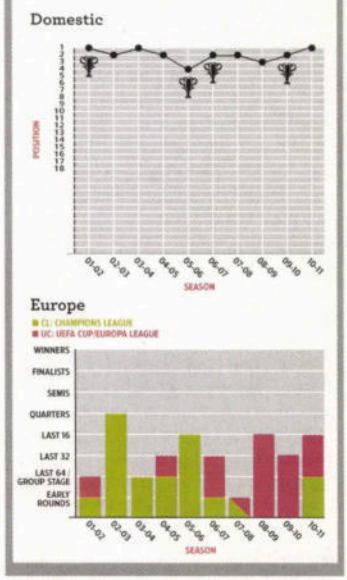
Kolbeinn SIGTHORSSON (Ice)
Age 21 (14.03.90)
A revelation last season, bagging 15 goals for AZ before his move to Ajax in July.



Miralem SULEJMANI (Ser)
Age 22 (05.12.88)
Talented but unpredictable winger who has started to justify the £14m paid to Heerenveen.

Plus: Geoffrey **CASTILLION** (Age 20, 25.05.91), Mounir **EL HAMDAOUI** (Mor; Age 26, 14.07.84), Jody **LUKOKI** (DRC; Age 18, 15.11.92)

10-YEAR RECORD



HOLLAND
Twente

THE COACH

Co ADRIAANSE
Age 64 (21.07.47)
Much-travelled, highly successful coach back in Holland after six years abroad. Charismatic and able to squeeze the best out of a squad.

(All ages as of 01.08.11)

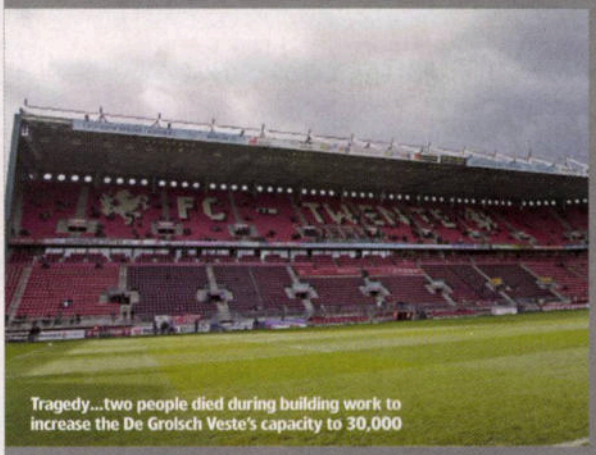
GOALKEEPERS

Sander BOSCHKER
Age 40 (20.10.70)
Lost out to Mihailov after returning from the World Cup, but did lead Twente to their Dutch Cup win.

Nikolay MIHAILOV (Bul)
Age 23 (28.06.88)
Ex-Liverpool reserve given the nod by Preud'homme last year. Reliable but flamboyant, facing a big fight to stay No1.

Plus: Nick **MARSMAN** (Age 20, 01.10.90)

No one-hit wonders in Enschede



Tragedy...two people died during building work to increase the De Grolsch Veste's capacity to 30,000

Last season's Dutch Cup success and league runners-up spot proved that 2010 Eredivise champions Twente are no one-hit wonder.

In Fred Rutten, Steve McClaren and Michel Preud'homme, chairman Joop Munsterman has hired a succession of quality coaches who have given the squad self-esteem and helped push them to the top of the table. And with Preud'homme having left for Saudi Arabia's Al Shabab, he has now turned to the charismatic Co Adriaanse.

However, the club's pre-season planning was tragically disrupted when a proposed new stand collapsed during building work at Twente's De Grolsch Veste stadium, leaving two people dead and 16 injured.

DEFENDERS

Rasmus BENGTSSON
Age 25 (26.06.86)
Central defender who joined from Hertha Berlin last year. Mostly on bench last term but reliable replacement for either Douglas or Wisgerhof.

Bart BUYSSE (Blg)
Age 24 (16.10.86)
Left-back who had a few adaptation problems when arriving last year.

DOUGLAS (Bra)
Age 23 (12.01.88)
Naturalised Brazilian in line to join the Holland side. Was once suspended for six matches for attacking a referee after being sent off.

Roberto ROSALES (Ven)
Age 22 (20.11.88)
Right-back who is a better attacker than defender. Came with Preud'homme from Gent last season.

Dwight TIENDALLI
Age 25 (21.10.85)
Signed on a free from Feyenoord two years ago, he can play on either flank.

Peter WISGERHOF
Age 31 (19.11.79)
Down-to-earth club captain, knows his limits and will never try anything impossible. Has made a couple of appearances for the national team.

Plus: Tim **CORNELISSE** (Age 33, 03.05.78), Nicky **KUIPER** (Age 22, 07.06.89)

TACTICS

Douglas and Wisgerhof will be the backbone of Adriaanse's defence, with Brama controlling midfield. Up front the new coach will have several options and could use Ruiz either on the right flank or as a playmaker. De Jong could drop to midfield if the coach uses Janko as a target man, like he did at Salzburg.

4-3-3

MIDFIELDERS

Steven BERGHUIS
Age 19 (19.12.91)
Promising left-sided midfielder expecting more playing time this season. Son of former PSV winger Frank Berghuis.

Wout BRAMA
Age 24 (21.08.86)
Seldom the star but irreplaceable as Twente's controlling midfielder. Gives other players, such as Ruiz, the chance to shine.

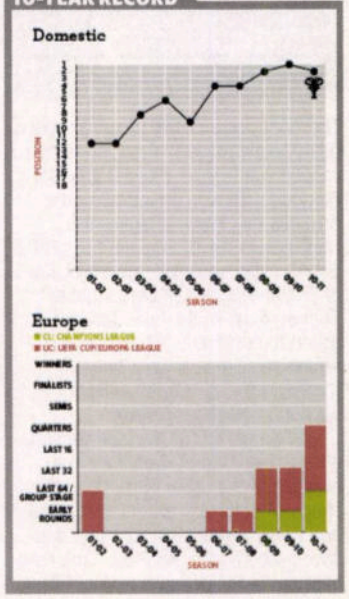
Luuk DE JONG
Age 20 (27.08.90)
Younger brother of Ajax's Siem, he can play up front or in midfield.

Willem JANSSEN
Age 25 (04.07.86)
Dynamic midfielder, he is a box-to-box player who can also score goals. Signed from Roda.

Denny LANDZAAT
Age 35 (06.05.76)
Blossomed since his move from Feyenoord and willing to show that his career isn't over yet.

Theo LEUGERS (Ger)
Age 20 (09.01.91)
Was a summer target for German club Energie Cottbus, but Adriaanse refused to let him leave.

10-YEAR RECORD



FORWARDS

Emir BAJRAMI (Swe)
Age 23 (07.03.88)
Kosovo-born winger who failed to make an impact in his first season. Lost his place to Chadli and has mostly been used as a substitute since.

Nacer CHADLI (Blg)
Age 21 (02.09.89)
Belgium international of Moroccan descent who has been a constant threat since joining from second division AGOVV.

Marc JANKO (Aut)
Age 28 (25.06.83)
Twente's record buy suffered from a lack of service and lost out to De Jong. Was Europe's top scorer under Adriaanse at Salzburg.

Ola JOHN
Age 19 (19.05.92)
Younger brother of former Fulham striker Collins John. Right-winger who came to Holland with his family as a refugee from Liberia.

Andrej RENDLA (Slk)
Age 20 (13.10.90)
Regarded as one of the club's biggest talents, injuries have hampered his hopes of a breakthrough. Loaned to Heracles last season.

Bryan RUIZ (CR)
Age 25 (18.08.85)
Twente's most dangerous player was less dominant last season due to personal problems and an injury.

ITALY

The usual suspects: debt, match-fixing and scandal

Introduction...new coach Luis Enrique meets his Roma players for the first time

Key dates

Season starts
August 28, 2011
Season ends
May 13, 2012

The front page of Italy's leading sports daily, *Gazzetta Dello Sport*, recently carried a little joke about Roma idol Francesco Totti. In an interview the previous day, Franco Baldini, the right-hand man of England boss Fabio Capello, had spoken enthusiastically of England's greatest bard, namely Shakespeare. In the joke, Totti is asked to comment: "Shakespeare?" replies the 34-year-old. "No, no thanks, we're all settled up front, we don't need anyone else."

As we set off for the new season, it is again a case of rounding up a number of the usual suspects in the shape of polemics, a betting scandal and hardy annuals such as Totti and Juve's Alessandro Del Piero. One new element in the Italian firmament this season, however, will be an American-owned Roma for which Baldini has been recruited as an experienced guide. As he assesses his return to an Italian football world he left six years ago, Baldini underlines some uncomfortable home truths about the contemporary Italian scene.

"Why should anyone invest in Italian football?" he has asked. "The bureaucracy is huge and slow, legality is questionable, and there is always a huge confusion about what you can and cannot do, we never offer sure answers only uncertainty.

"The worst thing about our football is that even though it makes money it has still got poorer. Italian football didn't know how to handle its money and now, in this climate of global crisis, it is all the more in trouble."

The climate of uncertainty alluded to by Baldini is exemplified perfectly by the preparations of the reigning champions, Milan, Italy's most successful side in European competition. As so often, events that have little or nothing to do with football may well yet impinge upon the club owned by prime minister Silvio Berlusconi.

In early July, the embattled PM received one of a number of recent setbacks when a Milan appeals court ruled that his family holding company, Fininvest, should pay a compensation settlement of €560million to the CIR conglomerate in the so-called "Mondadori" case. Furthermore, this being an appeal hearing, Fininvest now have to pay, cash up front.

This, in turn, has led to widespread speculation that Milan, which forms part of the Fininvest group, could yet be affected, given that monies destined for the transfer market will now clearly be put to another use. The Berlusconi family are reported to be considering a variety of options, including floating the club on the stock exchange to raise capital or selling a minority shareholding to wealthy investors, perhaps of the Middle Eastern kind.

Milan, of course, like most Italian clubs is run at a loss. In 2010, the club ended the year €69m in the red. A recent study by the Football Federation suggests that between 2007 and 2010, the overall debts of Serie A, Serie B and Lega Pro (third and fourth division) clubs rose from €2.2billion to €2.9bn. Furthermore, Italian clubs manage to earn from sponsors, merchandising and other

Returning...Baldini

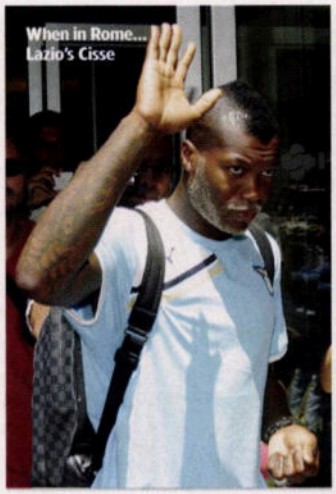
commercial activities roughly half the sums earned by Premier League and Bundesliga teams. On top of that, Serie A and Serie B clubs currently owe an estimated €300m to the revenue commissioners.

So then, against the background of a financial crisis, an ongoing betting scandal and following a year of total ignominy in European competition, what can we expect of Italian football on the field this season? Answer: a league dominated by Inter, Juventus and Milan and further probable failure in European competition.

As reigning champions **Milan** deserve to start favourites but many observers would argue that it is their city cousins, **Internazionale**, who remain the strongest side in the land, despite a disappointing 2010-2011 season in which they appeared to pay the physical and mental price for their treble success the previous year.

As for **Juventus**, their most significant change this summer may well concern the role of coach, with former Juve player, Antonio Conte, who was highly successful with both Bari and Siena in Serie B, taking over from Gigi Delneri. Another important move may also be that of 33-year-old Italy and Milan idol Andrea Pirlo on a free, with a three-year contract worth €3m per annum, who seems set to become a key figure for a side in which he will be expected to supply the goods for a possible four-man attack of Milos Krasic, Del Piero (or Vincenzo Iaquinta), Alessandro Matri and Fabio Quagliarella.

One of the key questions regarding the new season concerns **Napoli** and **Udinese** who could both find Champions League football represents a costly distraction. For Udinese, too,


When in Rome... Lazio's Cisse

the jury is out, but the loss of Alexis Sanchez to Barcelona will hurt.

Which leaves us with **Roma** and **Lazio**. All the initial indications of the new US-funded era at Roma are that the "project" may take some time, not only for the new management to assemble a strong squad but also for the existing one to assimilate the ideas of new Spanish coach Luis Enrique. In the meantime, what do they do with Totti? Will there be space for him? Will he have an important role in the new team?

As for Lazio, notwithstanding the purchases of strikers, Miroslav Klose from Bayern Munich and Djibril Cisse from Panathinaikos, as well as goalkeeper Federcio Marchetti, they look like they will have a tough job matching their excellent performance last season when they came painfully close to qualifying for the Champions League. Coach Edy Reja will have to

Hard to beat... Migliaccio of Palermo (left)

work wonders with a squad that will probably see the departure of the enigmatic, but talented Argentinian striker Mauro Zarate.

As for the rest, they can be divided into three groups. Firstly, there are the newly promoted trio of Atalanta, Novara and Siena – even if there is the risk that **Atalanta** could yet find themselves back in Serie B (or lower) in the wake of the alleged involvement of Cristiano Doni in the betting scandal.

Siena – coached last season by Conte, who is now replaced by Giuseppe Sannino – appear to be clear of the betting problems, while **Novara** represent a genuine feel-good story in that they are back in Serie A after 55 years, having risen from the third division in two seasons. These three will probably join **Cagliari**, **Catania**, **Cesena**, **Lecce** – and perhaps **Parma** – in a long battle against relegation.

In the second group are teams such as **Bologna**, **Chievo** and **Genoa** who are probably good for a safe, mid-table finish, while the third group comprises only **Fiorentina** and **Palermo** as teams that could cause problems for the big guns. Featuring the welcome return from injury of Montenegrin ace Stevan Jovetic, as well as Alberto Gilardino up front, Riccardo Montolivo and Peru's Juan Vargas in midfield, Fiorentina, still coached by Sinisa Mihajlovic, look competitive.

Palermo's season is harder to predict, given that Argentinian midfielder Javier Pastore, arguably their most inspirational figure, is seemingly on his way elsewhere. With Josip Illic and Fabrizio Miccoli in attack, and a battling midfield of Federico Balzaretti, Antonio Nocerino, Giulio Migliaccio and Mattia Cassani, Palermo under new coach Stefano Pioli will be another hard nut to crack, especially in Sicily.

Paddy Agnew

Going up...Novara celebrate promotion

Time for a change...Pirlo

SIGNING OF THE SUMMER
ANDREA PIRLO (Juventus)
The veteran midfielder joins a select group of players who have played for Juventus and both Milan teams after moving to Turin on a free transfer.

ITALY

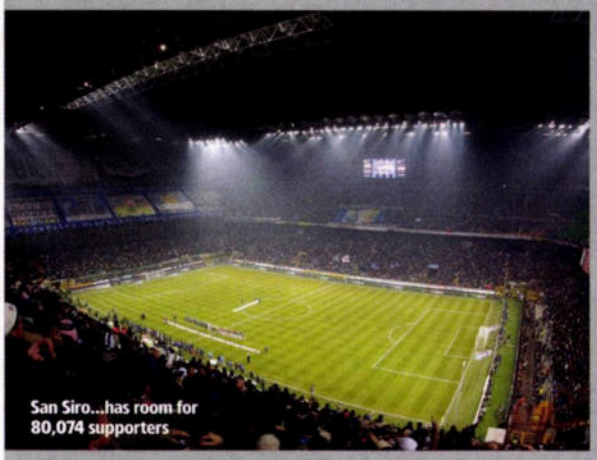
Internazionale

THE COACH

Gian Piero GASPERINI
Age 53 (26.01.58)
Signed this summer on a relatively small salary. Chosen ahead of the likes of Capello, Hiddink and Bielsa.

(All ages as of 01.08.11)

New boss will hope his side make amends for last season



San Siro...has room for 80,074 supporters

If the playing personnel looks distinctly familiar, with the Velez Sarsfeld attacker Ricky Alvarez and defender Jonathan from Santos their only significant signings so far, Inter have, however, made one fundamental change: Genoa coach Gian Piero Gasperini replacing Leonardo after being singled out for praise by Jose Mourinho during his Italian days.

If any Serie A side can be expected to do well in the Champions League, then it has to be Inter, with the likes of Esteban Cambiasso, Thiago Motta, Gianpaolo Pazzini and Samuel Eto'o forming the backbone of a very competitive side.

Last season, especially against Schalke, Inter let themselves down. It is hard to imagine that as many things will go wrong this season as did last season.

GOALKEEPERS

JULIO CESAR (Bra)
Age 31 (03.09.79)
One of the world's best but capable of the occasional blunder – as against Holland in the 2010 World Cup.

Emiliano VIVIANO
Age 25 (01.12.85)
Six caps for Italy, he was signed from Bologna but may be sent out on loan.

Plus: Luca **CASTELLAZZI** (Age 36, 19.07.75)

DEFENDERS

Cristian CHIVU (Rom)
Age 30 (26.10.80)
Can play in central or the left side of defence, as well as in defensive midfield.

Ivan CORDOBA (Col)
Age 34 (11.08.76)
Hugely experienced centre-back who is mostly a reserve.

LUCIO (Bra)
Age 31 (08.05.78)
Brazil centre-back who enjoys forays forward. An evangelical Christian.

Yuto NAGATOMO (Jap)
Age 24 (12.09.86)
Left-back who was signed permanently this summer after spending the second half of last term on loan from Cesena.

Andrea RANNOCHIA
Age 23 (16.02.88)
Highly rated centre-back signed from Genoa in Janaury for £11m.

Walter SAMUEL (Arg)
Age 33 (23.03.78)
Tough centre-back, nicknamed *Il Murio* (the wall) who suffered a knee injury last season.

Plus: Nelson **RIVAS** (Col; Age 28, 25.03.83)

TACTICS

Gasperini is expected to favour a back three. Wing-backs Zanetti and Jonathan are both likely to be chosen ahead of Maicon. Although Sneijder could move on, if he were to stay he could join Eto'o and Pazzini in a front three. Or Alvarez could push forward, with Thiago Motta added to central midfield.

3-4-3

MIDFIELDERS

Esteban CAMBIASSO (Arg)
Age 30 (18.08.80)
Hugely influential defensive midfielder, hard-running and tough-tackler who can also create.

JONATHAN (Bra)
Age 25 (27.02.86)
Attacking right-back signed from Santos after just six months with the Libertadores Cup winners.

Thiago MOTTA
Age 28 (28.08.82)
Brazil-born, Barcelona raised, signed from Genoa in 2009. A naturalised Italy international.

Wesley SNEIJDER (Hol)
Age 27 (09.06.84)
Playmaker who may not fit Gasperini's tactical scheme. Linked with a move to Manchester United this summer.

Dejan STANKOVIC (Ser)
Age 32 (11.09.78)
An important creative influence over the past seven seasons but currently sidelined with injury.

Javier ZANETTI (Arg)
Age 37 (10.08.73)
A colossus at Inter for the past 16 seasons, on either flank and in defence or midfield. Made his 1,000th professional appearance in May.

Plus: MAICON (Bra; Age 30, 26.07.81), Sully **MUNTARI** (Gha; Age 26, 27.08.84) Joel **OBI** (Ngr; Age 20, 22.05.91)

FORWARDS

Ricky ALVAREZ (Arg)
Age 23 (12.04.88)
Attacking midfielder whose value has rocketed in the past year. Joined Inter from Velez Sarsfield for £10m in July.

Luc CASTAIGNOS (Hol)
Age 19 (27.09.92)
Highly rated prospect signed this summer after scoring 15 goals for strugglnig Feyenoord last season.

Samuel ETO'O (Cam)
Age 30 (10.03.81)
The most successful African footballer of all time and one of two players to score in two Champions League Finals.

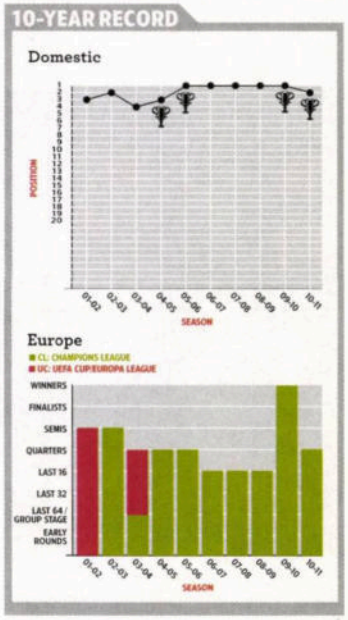
Diego MILITO (Arg)
Age 32 (12.06.79)
Prolific marksman struggled to replicate the outstanding form of Inter's European Cup-winning season of 2009-10.

Goran PANDEV (Mac)
Age 28 (27.07.83)
A prolific scorer for Lazio but has not reproduced that form at Inter.

Giampaolo PAZZINI
Age 26 (02.08.84)
Joined in January from Sampdoria. Scored first goal and hat-trick at new Wembley, for Italy under-21s.

Plus: Denis **ALIBEC** (Rom; Age 20, 05.01.91)

10-YEAR RECORD



ITALY

Milan

THE COACH

Massimiliano ALLEGRI

Age 43 (11.08.67)
Steered Milan to the Serie A title in his first season after joining from Genoa. Low-key approach but popular with the players.

(All ages as of 01.08.11)

Same old questions to be asked of Allegri's side

San Siro...shared by Milan and Inter

With uncertainty about the Berlusconi financial imput hanging over the club, Milan seem set to go with much the same squad as last season and it is arguable that the arrival of the new boys Philippe Mexes (Roma), Taye Taiwo (Marseille) and Stephan El Shaarawy (Padova) hardly represents a huge qualitative leap.

So, does all this mean that we can expect nothing better than last season's campaign in the Champions League, when Milan went out to Tottenham Hotspur in the second round? And will Milan's great Champions League record and experience cover up the cracks in a team that may feature ageing stars such as Alessandro Nesta (35), Gennaro Gattuso (33), Marc Van Bommel (34) and Clarence Seedorf (35)?

GOALKEEPERS

Christian ABBIATI

Age 34 (08.07.77)
Established as first-choice after loan spells with Juventus, Torino and Atletico Madrid.

Marco AMELIA

Age 29 (02.04.82)
Reserve keeper signed permanently from Genoa this summer after loan spell last season.

Plus: Flavio **ROMA** (Age 37, 21.06.74)

DEFENDERS

Ignazio ABATE

Age 24 (12.11.86)
Has overcome doubts about his attacking ability to establish himself as first-choice right-back.

Luca ANTONINI

Age 29 (04.08.82)
Versatile defender who can pay on either flank. Linked with a move to Paris Saint-Germain.

Philippe MEXES (Fra)

Age 29 (30.05.82)
Centre-back signed on a free transfer from Roma. Seen as Nesta's long-term replacement.

Alessandro NESTA

Age 35 (19.03.76)
Veteran centre-back who remains first choice and insists he has no plans to retire.

Taye TAIWO (Ngr)

Age 26 (16.04.85)
Hard-running left-back signed on a free transfer from Marseille this summer. Fierce shot from distance.

THIAGO SILVA (Bra)

Age 26 (22.09.84)
Outstanding central defender, signed from Fluminense in 2009 after injury-hit spells with Porto and Dynamo Moscow.

Plus: Daniele **BONERA** (Age 30, 31.05.81), Massimo **ODDO** (Age 35, 14.06.76), Gianluca **ZAMBROTTA** (Age 34, 19.02.77)

TACTICS

Allegri sets his Milan side up in a 4-3-1-2 formation which becomes a more expansive 4-3-3, with Boateng dropping into a midfield three and Cassano or Robinho joining the attack from the bench. Veterans dominate in midfield, but a new creative figure could still arrive before the transfer window.

4-3-1-2

MIDFIELDERS

Massimo AMBROSINI

Age 34 (19.05.77)
Club captain who will alternate with Van Bommel in defensive midfield role.

Kevin-Prince BOATENG (Gha)

Age 24 (06.03.87)
Germany-born Ghana international whose loan deal from Genoa was made permanent this summer.

Urby EMANUELSON (Hol)

Age 25 (16.06.86)
Left-sided Holland international signed from Ajax in January. Can play in defence or midfield.

Gennaro GATTUSO

Age 33 (09.01.78)
Banned for three European matches after his scrap with Tottenham coach Joe Jordan last season.

Clarence SEEDORF (Hol)

Age 35 (01.01.76)
The only man to have won the European Cup with three different clubs (Ajax, Real Madrid, Milan). Recently signed a new one-year contract.

Mark VAN BOMMEL (Hol)

Age 34 (22.04.77)
Another veteran who has signed a one-year deal, having previously joined up for six months from Bayern Munich in January.

Plus: Stephan **EL SHAARAWY** (Age 18, 27.10.92), Mathieu **FLAMINI** (Fra; Age 27, 07.03.84)

FORWARDS

Antonio CASSANO

Age 29 (12.07.82)
Once the world's most expensive teenager but still a maverick attacker who can infuriate and delight in equal measure.

Zlatan IBRAHIMOVIC (Swe)

Age 29 (03.10.81)
A footballing enigma: talented but difficult, with a remarkable CV that includes nine titles in the past 10 years with five different clubs.

Filippo INZAGHI

Age 37 (09.08.73)
Veteran goalpoacher whose career seemed finished by a serious knee injury last season but he is determined to play again.

Alberto PALOSCHI

Age 21 (04.01.90)
Italy Under-21 striker, co-owned by Parma, he spent last season on loan at Genoa.

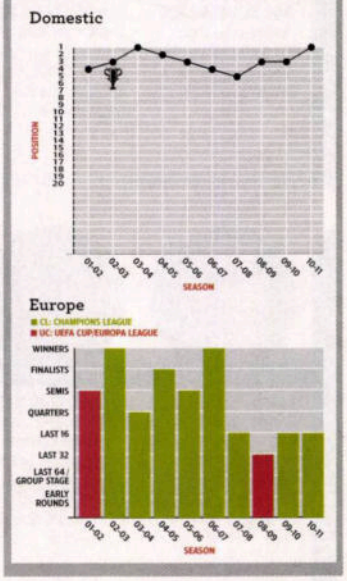
Alexandre PATO (Bra)

Age 21 (02.09.89)
Has had more than his fair share of injuries but remains first choice. Is dating Silvio Berlusconi's daughter Barbara.

ROBINHO (Bra)

Age 27 (25.01.84)
Has learned more discipline since joining from Manchester City, but may have to be content with a place on the bench.

10-YEAR RECORD



ITALY

Napoli

THE COACH

Walter MAZZARRI
Age 49 (01.10.61)
Took Sampdoria to sixth place in 2008. Joined Napoli in 2009, replacing ex-Italy coach Roberto Donadoni.

(All ages as of 01.08.11)

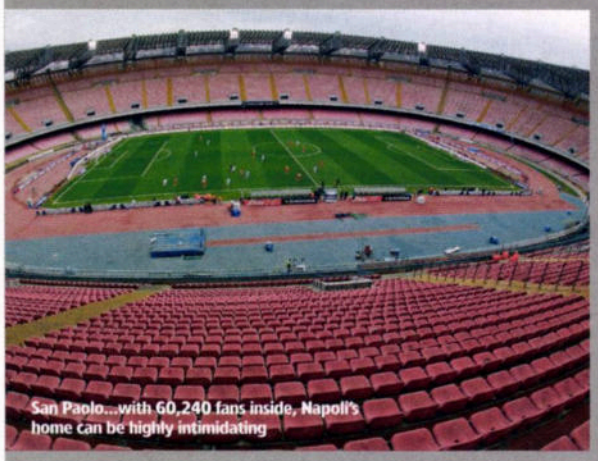
GOALKEEPERS

Morgan DE SANCTIS
Age 34 (26.03.77)
First choice who was reserve at Juventus before spells at Udinese, Sevilla and Galatasaray.

Antonio ROSATI
Age 28 (26.06.83)
Signed this summer as back-up to De Sanctis after six seasons at Lecce.

Plus: Roberto **COLOMBO** (Age 35, 24.08.75)

Home advantage could make Napoli the surprise package



San Paolo...with 60,240 fans inside, Napoli's home can be highly intimidating

Back in European football's top club competition for the first time since the Maradona days of the early 1990s, Napoli may surprise many.

Not only do they have a competitive squad featuring the impressive attacking trio of Marek Hamsik, Edinson Cavani and Ezequiel Lavezzi, but they will be strengthened by the arrival of Argentinian centre-back Federico Fernandez from Estudiantes, Uruguayan defender Miguel Angel Britos of Bologna, and Swiss midfielders Gokhan Inler and Blerim Dzemaili, who join from Udinese and Parma rsepectively.

Add in the passionate support of the Napoli fans, the skills of coach Walter Mazzarri and there could be some big nights at the San Paolo.

DEFENDERS

Salvatore ARONICA
Age 33 (20.01.78)
Left-sided defender who has been a regular in Serie A since 2004 and with Napoli since 2008.

Miguel Angel BRITOS (Uru)
Age 26 (17.07.85)
Centre-back who joined from Bologna this summer for a fee of around £8m.

Hugo CAMPAGNARO (Arg)
Age 31 (27.01.80)
Centre-back who has been a regular since joining from Sampdoria in 2008.

Paolo CANNAVARO
Age 29 (26.07.81)
Club captain who rejoined his boyhood club from Parma in 2006. Brother of Fabio.

Andrea DOSSENA
Age 29 (11.09.81)
Attack-minded left-back finding his form after a disappointing spell at Liverpool. Capped 10 times by Italy.

Federico FERNANDEZ (Arg)
Age 22 (21.02.89)
Centre-back signed from Estudiantes this summer for a fee of around £2.5m.

Plus: Gianluca **GRAVA** (Age 34, 07.03.77) Victor **RUIZ** (Spa; Age 22, 25.01.89), Juan **ZUNIGA** (Age 25, 14.12.85)

TACTICS

Mazzarri prefers to go with a three-man back line, which has now been reinforced by the signing of Britos. The wing-backs add pace on the flanks and help to feed Cavani, who is the main front runner. Hamsik, assuming that he stays, and Lavezzi are the secondary forwards.

3-4-2-1

MIDFIELDERS

Marco DONADEL
Age 28 (21.04.83)
Joined on a free from Fiorentina this summer after six seasons in Florence.

Blerim DZEMAILI (Swi)
Age 25 (12.04.86)
Combative central midfielder who was signed from Parma for around £8m this summer.

Walter GARGANO (Uru)
Age 26 (23.07.84)
Defensive midfielder signed from Danubio in 2007. Member of Uruguay's 2010 World Cup squad.

Gokhan INLER (Swi)
Age 27 (27.06.84)
Playmaker who wore a lion mask at his unveiling to the media after his £13m transfer from Udinese.

Christian MAGGIO
Age 29 (11.02.82)
Right-back or wing-back who joined from Sampdoria in 2008. Member of Italy's 2010 World Cup squad.

Mario SANTANA (Arg)
Age 29 (23.12.81)
Winger who joined from Fiorentina this summer.

Plus: Daniele **MANNINI** (Age 27, 25.10.83), Jose Ernesto **SOSA** (Arg; Age 25, 19.06.85)

FORWARDS

Edinson CAVANI (Uru)
Age 24 (12.02.87)
Prolific forward whose loan from Palermo was turned into a permanent deal this summer for £14m.

Nicolao DUMITRU
Age 19 (12.10.91)
Italy Under-21, born in Sweden, whose Romanian father had Italian citizenship. Loaned back to former club Empoli this season.

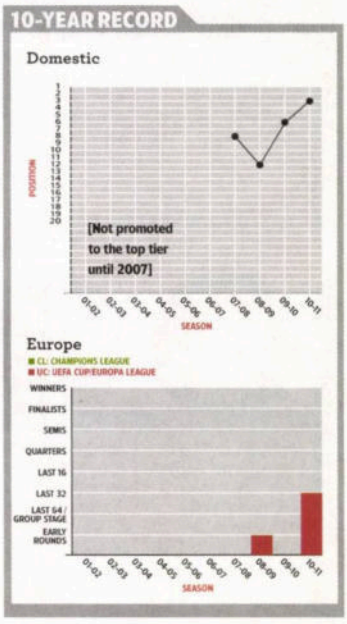
Marek HAMSIK (Slk)
Age 23 (27.07.87)
One of Europe's most coveted midfielders, the spiky-haired maker and taker of chances joined from Brescia in 2007.

Ezequiel LAVEZZI (Arg)
Age 25 (03.05.85)
Signed from San Lorenzo in 2007. Plays as a secondary striker.

Cristiano LUCARELLI
Age 35 (04.10.75)
Broke into the Italy side while at Livorno and also attracted controversy for his support of left-wing ultras.

Giuseppe MASCARA
Age 31 (22.08.79)
Much travelled in the lower divisions, joined from Catania in January. Played once for Italy.

10-YEAR RECORD



ITALY

Udinese

THE COACH

Francesco GUIDOLIN
Age 55 (03.10.55)
After several spells at Palermo, and most recently Parma, he has taken Udinese to another level.

(All ages as of 01.08.11)

Loss of star trio set to make life hard for Guidolin's side

Stadio Friuli... built in 1976
Udinese's home seats 41,652

All the signs suggest that Udinese's Champions League showing this season could be short, sharp and probably not very sweet, with failure to qualify for the group stage a distinct possibility.

With three key players – Chilean striker Alexis Sanchez (to Barcelona), Swiss midfielder Gokhan Inler (Napoli) and Colombian defender Cristian Zapata (Villarreal) – having moved on, it is hard to see the Friuli club repeating last season's success, when they not only finished fourth in Serie A but played excellent football in the process.

Even coach Francesco Guidolin admits it will be hard but, nevertheless, Udinese's record of buying talent cheap and selling on for a profit is a model that aspiring clubs could follow.

GOALKEEPERS

Emanuele BELARDI
Age 33 (09.11.77)
Reserve keeper who joined from Juventus in 2008. Wears squad number six.

Samir HANDANOVIC (Sln)
Age 27 (14.07.84)
Penalty specialist who has been first choice since 2007. His cousin, Jasmin, is also an international goalkeeper.

Plus: Jan **KOPRIVEC** (Sln; Age 23, 15.07.88)

DEFENDERS

Mehdi BENATIA (Mor)
Age 25 (07.04.87)
France-born but capped by Morocco. Plays on the right side of Udinese's three-man defence.

Andrea CODA
Age 26 (25.04.85)
Centre-back who is likely to be a reserve following the arrival of Danilo.

DANILO (Bra)
Age 27 (10.05.84)
Centre-back who was Udinese's first major buy of the summer, joining from Palmeiras.

Maurizio DOMIZZI
Age 31 (26.06.80)
Left-sided central defender who was signed from Napoli in 2008.

Joel EKSTRAND (Swe)
Age 21 (04.02.89)
Centre-back signed from Helsingborg in 2010 but has yet to establish himself in the first team.

Giovanni PASQUALE
Age 29 (05.01.82)
Left-sided defender who can also play in midfield. Started out at Internazionale.

Plus: Dusan **BASTA** (Ser; Age 28, 18.08.82), Juan Guillermo **CUADRADO** (Col; Age 23, 26.05.88), Damiano **FERRONETTI** (Age 26, 01.11.84)

TACTICS

Last season Guidolin favoured an ambitious 3-5-2 or 3-4-3 approach in which the forwards pressed high up the pitch, pulling defenders out of position, and allowing the midfielders to exploit the free space. But the departure of Sanchez may make that strategy more difficult.

3-5-2

MIDFIELDERS

Pablo ARMERO (Col)
Age 24 (02.11.86)
Left wing-back signed from Palmeiras in 2010. Linked with Liverpool earlier this year.

Kwadwo ASAMOAH (Gha)
Age 22 (09.12.88)
Central or left-sided midfielder who has been a regular since 2009. Member of Ghana's 2010 World Cup squad.

Antonio CANDREVA
Age 24 (28.02.87)
Back at Udinese after spending last season on loan at Parma. Capped twice by Italy.

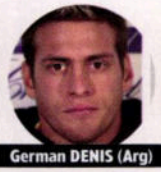
Thierry DOUBAI (IvC)
Age 21 (01.07.88)
Signed from Swiss side Young Boys this summer as a replacement for Gokhan Inler.

Mauricio ISLA (Chl)
Age 23 (12.06.88)
Highly versatile midfielder signed as a teenager after starring in the South American Under-20 Championship.

Giampiero PINZI
Age 30 (11.03.81)
Long-serving midfielder with one cap for the Italian national side.

FORWARDS

BARRETO (Bra)
Age 26 (12.07.85)
Striker who was bought back from Bari this summer, 12 months after being sold by Udinese.



German DENIS (Arg)
Age 29 (10.09.81)
Joined in 2010 from Napoli, who still own a 50 per cent share. A prolific scorer at Independiente.

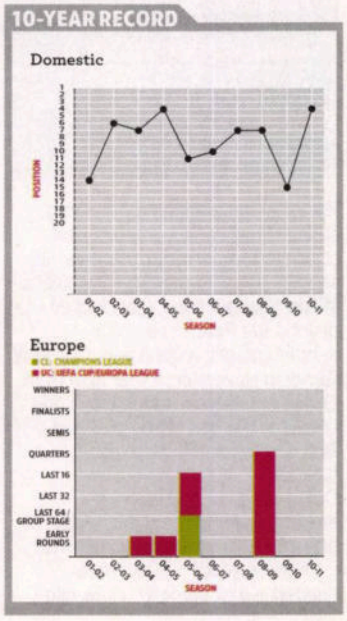
Antonio DI NATALE
Age 34 (13.01.77)
Serie A top scorer last season. Italy international who has been with Udinese since 2004, rejecting offers to move on.

Diego FABBRINI
Age 21 (31.07.90)
Italy under-21 winger signed from Empoli this summer.

Antonio FLORO FLORES
Age 28 (18.06.83)
Striker who is back at Udinese after a productive loan spell at Genoa last season.

Matej VYDRA (CzR)
Age 19 (01.05.92)
Promising young striker signed from Banik Ostrava in 2010 but yet to make the breakthrough at Udinese.

10-YEAR RECORD



POLAND

Champions can't afford to shop at home

Foreign aid... Wisla Krakov's Honduran defender Osman Chavez

Key dates

Season starts
July 29, 2011
Winter break
December 25, 2011 to March 1, 2012
Season ends
May 6, 2012

Having seen foreign trio Erik Cikos, Mikhail Sivakov and Andreas Rios return to their parent clubs after last season's loans, defending champions **Wisla Krakow** have again looked beyond the Polish border for reinforcements. Argentinian midfielder Gervasio Nunez (on a year loan from Quilmes), Serbian league top scorer Ivica Iliev (Partizan Belgrade) and Dutch defender Michael Lamey (Leicester City) all arrived, with Dutch coach Robert Maaskant arguing: "I would like to buy Polish players, but they are too expensive."

Further proof – if any were needed – that domestic clubs can no longer afford the best home-grown players came with the sale of **Polonia Warsaw** midfielder Adrian Mierzejewski – the best player in last season's Ekstraklasa – to Trabzonspor for £4.7million, a record fee paid for a Polish league player.

Despite that considerable income, Polonia have held back a proportion of their remaining players' wages in a bid to build a "winning mentality", with the outstanding money only being paid if the team finish in the top two. Two of those who refused to accept the new pay plan, strikers Artur Sobiech and Euzebiusz Smolarek, were sold to Hanover and dropped to the reserves respectively.

Defender Marcin Baszczynski was signed from Greek club Atromitos, while midfielders Grzegorz Bonin and Slovak Robert Jez, and promising striker Daniel Sikorski, all arrived from Gornik Zabrze to join what Polonia owner Jozef Wojciechowski claims is "still the best squad in the Ekstraklasa".

Domestic cup holders **Legia Warsaw** have recruited two big names on one-year contracts in their push for league success. Former national team captain, 35-year-old Michal Zewlakow, who began his career at city rivals Polonia, decided to finish his career in his home city after spending 13 years abroad with Anderlecht, Olympiakos and Ankaragucu, among others. His huge experience should guarantee better quality in the Legia defence, while Serbian striker Danijel Ljuboja, signed from Nice, will be expected to offer the same quality up front.

Slask Wroclaw, who were unexpected runners-up last season, have extended 68-year-old coach Orest Lenczyk's contract, but it will be very difficult for his team to repeat last term's success.

Although last year's fourth place was **Jagiellonia Bialystok**'s best ever finish they were unhappy after leading the table in the first half of the campaign had given them title aspirations. They suffered further disappointment at the start of this season, going out of the Europa League 2-1 on aggregate to Kazakh side Artysh Pavlodar in the first qualifying round.

Champions in 2010, **Lech Poznan** retained Spanish coach Jose Maria Bakero despite poor results on domestic front. A club legend, the

Kept on...Lech Poznan coach Bakero

35-year-old central defender Bartosz Bosacki was not kept on, however, but the side will be boosted by the arrival of Bulgarian midfielder Aleksandyr Tonev from CSKA Sofia.

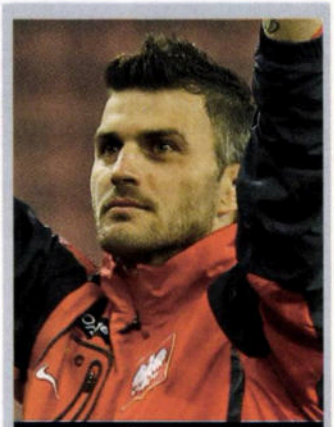
During the summer **Lechia Gdansk** moved to PGE Arena, a new stadium built for Euro 2012, but they will need some big names to fill the 43,600-capacity ground, having moved from their old 12,000-limit home. Among the players looked at were Emmanuel Olisadebe, the Nigeria-born former Poland striker who was recently with China's Henan Jianye, but he declined to sign.

GKS Belchatow were seen as relegation candidates last year after losing the sponsorship of a powerful local brown coal strip mine and thermal power station. However, they finished the season in mid-table and the summer return of former national coach Pawel Janas should help keep them at a similar level. The signing of Kamil Kosowski, capped 50 times and recently with Apollon Limassol, will also help.

It is hard to see **Zaglebie Lubin**, **Ruch Chorzow** or **Widzew Lodz** having much to say in where the silverware ends up this time. The same goes for **Cracovia**, who, after losing promising 21-year-old midfielder Mateusz Klich to Wolfsburg, have signed former Poland forward Andrzej Niedzielan. In a bid to cut their overheads, **Korona Kielce** will let Niedzielan go for free if he relinquishes all claims to money owed to him.

Gornik Zabrze are in the most financial trouble and, having sold their best players with no real hope of replacing them, avoiding relegation will be their chief goal – as it will for the promoted clubs **Podbeskidzie Bielsko-Biala**, who are in the Ekstraklasa for the first time, and **LKS Lodz**. A Licence Commission of the Polish FA has ordered the newcomers to play their home games in Wodzislaw (40 miles) and Belchatow (43 miles away) respectively until the "modernisation of their grounds fulfils the indicated licence criteria".

Dariusz Kurowski


Farewell...another season for Zewlakow

SIGNING OF THE SUMMER
MICHAL ZEWLAKOW
(Legia Warsaw)
Capped 102 times by Poland, the veteran full-back has returned to the city of his birth for one final season. His twin brother, Marcin, is a striker with GKS Belchatow.

Sporting hoping to catch champions and local rivals

Challenge...former Braga boss Paciencia must restore Sporting Lisbon's fortunes

Key dates

Season starts
August 14, 2011
Season ends
May 13, 2012

There is one question on everyone's lips as the new season kicks off: can any team compete with **Porto**? Last season the title race was over before it ever began, with the champions comfortably winning their 25th title by a massive 21 points over **Benfica**.

With Andre Villas-Boas having left Porto, there is hope for the Eagles of Lisbon to make a title challenge – but perhaps the biggest threat may lie just a couple of miles away at the Alvalade Stadium. A lot has changed at **Sporting Lisbon** and they harbour high hopes of returning to their glory days.

There is a new president, a new coach and new money – which has already helped bring in a dozen new players for this season. They didn't even need them; it was just that last season was such a disaster for the Sporting. They finished 36 points behind Porto, winning only 13 of their 30 matches in what was one of their worst league campaigns in the last two decades – which led to the mid-season sacking of Paulo Sergio and emergency presidential elections, won by Luis Godinho Lopes.

Domingos Paciencia, the young coach who led Braga in their first Champions League campaign and then to the Europe League Final, is the new man charged with landing Sporting's first league title since 2002. The former Porto striker showed himself to be a shrewd coach with a limited budget at Braga, but he is also a disciplinarian who prizes substance over style so don't expect any fireworks at Alvalade this season. However, the fans will take results over performances right now after enduring so many frustrating nights for so many years.

Domingos's former club will try to maintain its high standards in his absence, with **Braga** hiring unheralded Leonardo Jardim, who had spent only a couple of seasons in the top tier with Beira-Mar. Jardim may not have a lot of experience in the first division but he will be able to count on two veterans to lead the charge. Nuno Gomes, who has scored over 200 goals in his career, was signed on a free transfer from Benfica, and former international goalkeeper Quim is also around to help. A mixture of experience and youth should mean Braga will have enough weapons to compete for a European spot once again, even if their new boss takes a while to settle.

The financial crisis haunting the country means that few other teams will have a chance to match the elite clubs. One of the few who could cause a surprise are **Vitoria Guimaraes**. With a solid fan base and an experienced coach in Manuel Machado, Vitoria could cause a few upsets this term. They finished fifth last time out and could have done even better if some key players had not suffered serious injuries.

High flier...Rio Ave's Tomas

On the island of Madeira, **Nacional** will continue to cause the top teams all kinds of trouble – last season they beat Benfica and Sporting at home on their way to finishing sixth – but **Maritimo**, having lost Djalma and Kleber, could struggle.

Pacos Ferreira won't be able to count on Venezuela international Mario Rondon to knock in the goals any more as he has joined Nacional, but they shouldn't be underestimated and could be in the mix for a Europa League place this season.

Rio Ave raised a few eyebrows by finishing eighth last season, thanks in part to former Portugal striker Joao Tomas, who scored 16 goals – the most by any home-grown player.

Uniao Leiria and **Beira-Mar** both have the same problem: huge stadiums built for Euro 2004 but with no fans to fill them. The cash-strapped clubs flirted with relegation last year before finally securing their top-flight status but another season of suffering is on the horizon.

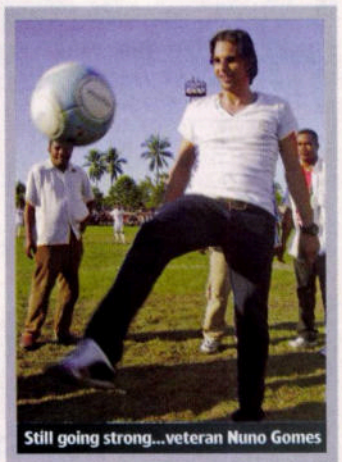
Three-time Portuguese Cup winners **Vitoria Setubal** are also struggling financially. Jose Mourinho's hometown team only just found enough money to register for the upcoming campaign and they could fold unless new investors are forthcoming.

Olhanense will once again be the Algarve's only representative in Portugal's top flight. Mozambique-born manager Dauto Faquira is considered a bright prospect and he will aim to improve on last season's 11th place finish.

One of the country's oldest and most respected clubs, **Academica** barely avoided relegation last season, but should do better after securing some important loan signings from Porto and Sporting Lisbon.

The two new clubs this season are **Gil Vicente** and **Feirense**, with the latter in the top flight for the first time since 1990.

Pedro Pinto


Still going strong...veteran Nuno Gomes

SIGNING OF THE SUMMER
NUNO GOMES (Braga)
At 35, the former Benfica and Portugal front runner will be looking to add to his 148-goal haul in the Portuguese league.

PORTUGAL

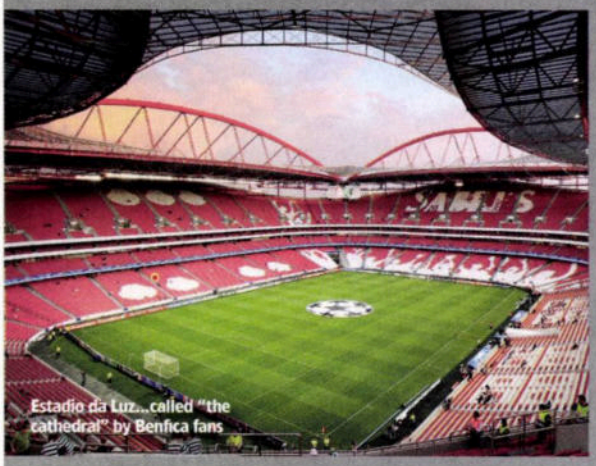
Benfica

THE COACH

Jorge JESUS
Age 57 (24.7.54)
Former Braga boss who won the league in his first season in charge at Benfica. Was criticised last year for excessive tinkering with tactics.

(All ages as of 01.08.11)

Eagles needing a lift from South American imports


Estadio da Luz...called "the cathedral" by Benfica fans

Despite remaining Portugal's most popular and successful club with a record 32 titles and two European Cups to their name, Benfica have been forced to play second fiddle to Porto in recent years.

The club's failure to produce home-grown talent and a high turnover of first-team players has left fans struggling to identify with the Eagles of Lisbon.

Raiding full-back Fabio Coentrao, whose stock has risen since his impressive World Cup performances in South Africa, left for Real Madrid this summer, but recruitment has been focused more on attacking options. Much will depend on the form of their South American imports, but coach Jorge Jesus knows that second place in the league will not be viewed as good enough by his critics.

GOALKEEPERS

ARTUR (Bra)
Age 30 (25.01.81)
Had a great season with Braga before opting to link up with his former manager. Tipped to become first choice.

ROBERTO (Spa)
Age 25 (10.02.86)
Much maligned and error-prone, endured a nightmare debut season after signing from Atletico Madrid.

Plus: JULIO CESAR (Bra; Age 24, 02.09.86)

DEFENDERS

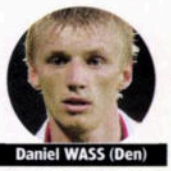
CESAR PEIXOTO
Age 31 (12.05.80)
Much-travelled left-back who looks set to enjoy plenty of playing time this season following Fabio Coentrao's exit to Real Madrid.

Ezequiel GARAY (Arg)
Age 24 (10.10.86)
Centre-back signed from Real Madrid for an undisclosed fee in July. Was part of Argentina's squad for the Copa America.

JARDEL (Bra)
Age 25 (29.03.86)
Brought in from Olhanense as a replacement for David Luiz but has struggled with a lack of pace and suspect temperament.

LUISAO (Bra)
Age 30 (13.02.81)
Calm and collected international centre-back who joined the club in 2003 and has been captain since 2006.

Maxi PEREIRA (Uru)
Age 27 (08.6.84)
Solid and composed right-back who has been one of the club's most consistent performers since arriving from Defensor in 2007.



Daniel WASS (Den)
Age 22 (31.05.89)
New arrival from Brondby. Signed primarily as a back-up right-back, can also play as an attacking midfielder.

Plus: Lionel **CAROLE** (Fra; Age 20, 12.04.91), **RODERICK** (Age 20, 30.03.91), Miguel **VITOR** (Age 22, 30.06.89)

TACTICS

Jesus likes to employ a classic 4-3-3 formation although at times he has gone with 4-4-2 against weaker teams to accommodate both Cardozo and Saviola up front. The coach encourages his team to go forward at every opportunity, a tactic which cost him dearly in key games last year.

4-3-3

MIDFIELDERS

Pablo AIMAR (Arg)
Age 31 (03.11.79)
Despite diminishing pace and a habit of going missing, he can still turn a game with his exquisite passing and dribbling.

CARLOS MARTINS
Age 29 (29.04.82)
Outstanding performer last season despite frustration at having to play second fiddle to Aimar.

JAVI GARCIA (Spa)
Age 24 (08.02.87)
Tough, defensive midfielder whose never-say-die attitude has endeared him to the fans since arriving from Real Madrid in 2009.

Enzo PEREZ (Arg)
Age 25 (22.02.86)
New signing who helped Estudiantes win the Libertadores Cup in 2009. Inventive winger who should add a dash of quality to the squad.

RUBEN AMORIM
Age 26 (27.01.85)
Versatile player equally at home in central midfield or right-back. Sidelined for several months last season due to knee surgery.

Alex WITSEL (Bel)
Age 22 (12.01.89)
Signed from Standard Liege in July. Banned for eight games in 2009 after breaking an opponent's leg with a reckless tackle.

Plus: BRUNO CESAR (Bra; Age 22, 03.11.88), Nemanja **MATIC** (Ser; Age 23, 01.08.88), **NOLITO** (Spa; Age 24, 15.11.86)

FORWARDS

Oscar CARDOZO (Par)
Age 28 (20.05.83)
Prolific marksman who has scored over 100 goals in just four seasons. Possesses a powerful left foot.

Nico GAITAN (Arg)
Age 23 (23.02.88)
Brought in to replace Angel Di Maria on the wing but has proved to be more effective just behind the front two.

Franco JARA (Arg)
Age 23 (15.07.88)
Used mainly as a substitute last season but still showed the flashes of brilliance that landed him a £5m move from Arsenal de Sarandi.

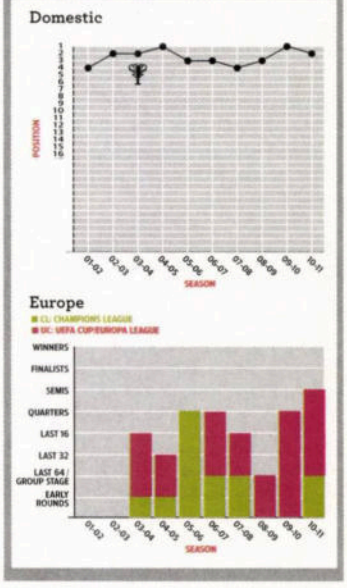
Rodrigo MORA (Uru)
Age 23 (29.10.87)
Quick and skilful, he was rated as one of the top prospects in the Uruguay last season. Signed from Defensor in June.

RODRIGO (Spa)
Age 20 (06.03.91)
Signed from Real Madrid last season before being loaned out to Bolton Wanderers to gain some experience.

Javier SAVIOLA (Arg)
Age 29 (11.12.81)
Former Barcelona and Real Madrid striker and one-time South American Player of the Year, *El Conejo* (The Rabbit) continues to be a prolific goalscorer.

Plus: Nelson **OLIVIERA** (Age 19, 08.08.91)

10-YEAR RECORD



PORTUGAL

Porto

THE COACH

Vitor PEREIRA
Age 42 (26.07.68)
Andre Villas-Boas' assistant last season will be trying to follow in his mentor's footsteps in his first year as a coach in the top flight.

(All ages as of 01.08.11)

Dragons set to continue the domination game

Dragons den...Porto fans will expect more success this season

The Dragons have dominated Portuguese football over the last decade, capturing seven league titles in 10 seasons. They have also won the Champions League and two UEFA Cup/Europa League trophies in the last seven years.

President Pinto Da Costa, who has been at the helm since 1982, has created a winning mentality at the Estadio do Dragao, always finding a way to pick the right coaches – such as Jose Mourinho and Andre Villas-Boas – and the right players to fit into his philosophy. Expect more of the same this season under new coach Vitor Pereira.

Porto's finances are secure thanks in large part to the revenue created by the yearly sales of players and prize money from their annual forays into Europe.

GOALKEEPERS

Rafael BRACALLI (Bra)
Age 30 (05.05.81)
Signed from Madeira club Nacional after a string of impressive performances.

HELTON (Bra)
Age 33 (18.05.78)
Great shot stopper and athlete who has become a fans' favourite in his six seasons at the club.

DEFENDERS

DANILO (Bra)
Age 20 (15.07.91)
Versatile right-sided player who can play in defence or midfield. Signed from Libertadores Cup winners Santos for £11.4m.

Jorge FUCILE (Uru)
Age 26 (19.11.84)
Versatile Uruguay international who can play as a full-back on either flank.

MAICON (Bra)
Age 22 (14.09.88)
Enjoyed a successful debut season with the champions and showed great aerial presence in the centre of defence.

Nicolas OTAMENDI (Arg)
Age 22 (12.10.88)
Centre-back who became a hit in his first season by scoring a series of important goals.

Alvaro PEREIRA (Uru)
Age 25 (28.11.85)
Quick left-back who is not shy about going forward.

ROLANDO
Age 25 (31.08.85)
Porto's best defender last season, calm and composed, the international builds from the back.

Plus: Daniel ADDY (Gha; Age 21, 21.02.90), Henrique **SERENO** (Age 26, 18.05.85)

TACTICS

Porto played an attacking 4-3-3 formation under Villas-Boas, with great mobility all over the pitch, so it will be interesting to see if his disciple Pereira maintains an "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" mentality when he takes over or tries to stamp his own personality on the side's tactics.

4-3-3

MIDFIELDERS

Fernando BELLUSCHI (Arg)
Age 27 (10.09.83)
Playmaker who flopped in his first season but shone under Villas-Boas.

Tomas COSTA (Arg)
Age 26 (30.01.85)
Burst onto the scene two years ago but loaned out last year.

Fredy GUARIN (Col)
Age 25 (30.06.86)
Tough and tenacious defensive midfielder with a penchant for scoring crucial goals last season.

JOAO MOUTINHO
Age 24 (08.09.86)
The cornerstone of Villas-Boas' midfield and influential from box to box.

RUBEN MICAEL
Age 24 (19.08.86)
One of the most talented Portuguese midfielders of his generation whose progress has been affected by injuries.

SOUZA (Bra)
Age 22 (11.02.89)
Promising central midfielder with great passing ability and shooting range.

Plus: Andre **CASTRO** (Age 23, 02.04.88)

FORWARDS

DJALMA (Ang)
Age 24 (30.05.87)
Recruited from Maritimo, fast and skilful he will add depth to the attack.

Radamel FALCAO (Col)
Age 25 (10.02.86)
Set a Europa League record with 17 goals last season. Signed a new contract in July that has a £40m release clause.

HULK (Bra)
Age 25 (25.07.86)
Scored 24 goals and had 13 assists in the league last season. The most explosive player in Portuguese football.

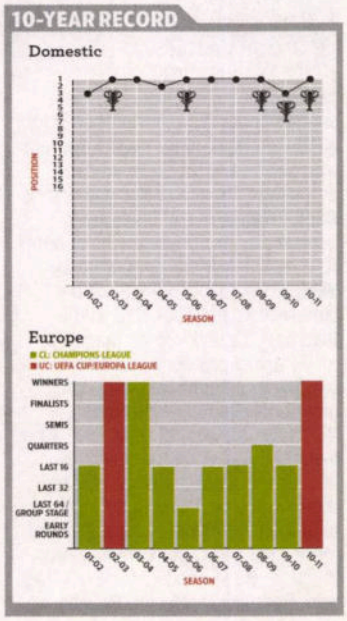
Juan Manuel ITURBE (Arg)
Age 18 (04.06.93)
Signed from Cerro Porteno, he has been compared with Leo Messi because of his speed and skill.

James RODRIGUEZ (Col)
Age 20 (12.07.91)
The best young player in the league last season, the winger can dribble, pass and score.

Silvestre VARELA
Age 26 (02.02.85)
Now enjoying a resurgence after failing to find his feet with Sporting Lisbon.

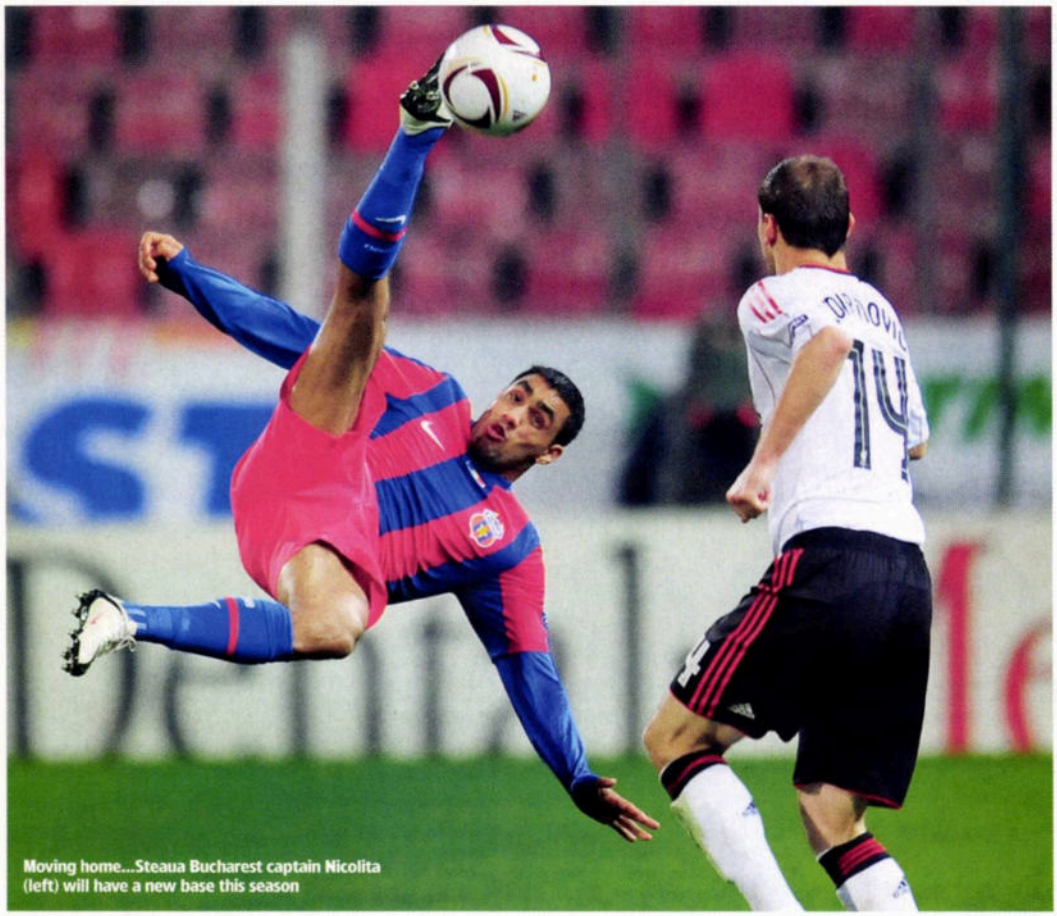
Plus: KELVIN (Bra; Age 18, 01.06.83), **KLEBER** (Bra; Age 21, 02.05.90), **WALTER** (Bra; Age 22, 22.07.89)

10-YEAR RECORD



ROMANIA

Licence problems upset final standings


Moving home...Steaua Bucharest captain Nicolita (left) will have a new base this season

Key dates

Season starts
July 22, 2011
Season ends
May 19, 2012

Last season's championship was another that will be remembered for all the wrong reasons after Timisoara, who finished runners-up, were denied the chance to join champions **Otelul Galati** in the Champions League due to non-payment of debts. As a result, they were replaced by **Vaslui** in Europe's premier club competition and relegated to the third tier of the domestic league.

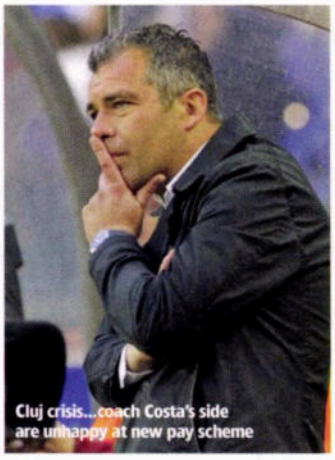
Financial problems will also see **Steaua Bucharest** leave their traditional Ghencea base after Romania's ministry of defence – who own the huge complex which also houses the Steaua Stadium – gave the club's backer Gigi Becali notice to quit for running up rent arrears of more than £250,000. After arenas in Pitesti, Buzau and Chiajna (a village near Bucharest) rejected Becali's request to move in, the latest plan is for Steaua to share the capital's new 60,000-capacity Stadionul National.

After four years without a trophy, Steaua are desperate for success and the man charged with the job of restoring the good times is Israeli coach Ronny Levy. But with 10 players leaving and 11 coming in, captain Banel Nicolita is the only survivor from the side that qualified for the Champions League group stage three times in a row.

A better bet for the title this year, however, could be **Rapid Bucharest**, led by former national coach Razvan Lucescu. "We have the best squad now, built after Lucescu's requests, and nothing would excuse us if we fail the title this season," says veteran striker Daniel Pancu. Romania internationals Ciprian Deac, on loan from Schalke, and Iulian Apostol from Unirea Urziceni are joined by Dan Alexa, Cristian Oros, Romeo Surdu, Felipe Teixeira and Valentin Cretu, although Rapid have lost Brazilian midfielder Julian Spadacio who has joined Vitoria Guimaraes in Portugal.

Dinamo Bucharest also have a new coach, with Liviu Ciubotaru replacing Ioan Andone. The biggest cause for concern among supporters, however, is a lack of new players coming in during the summer.

Former champions **CFR Cluj,** under the regime of Portuguese coach Jorge Costa, will only pay their players full salaries if the club are in the top three – an unpopular move which has already led to 11 quitting.


Cluj crisis...coach Costa's side are unhappy at new pay scheme

Universitatea Cluj announced a £3.5million budget for the new season with midfielder Adrian Cristea declaring that such investment means they have their sights set on "winning the Romanian Cup and finishing in the league's top four".

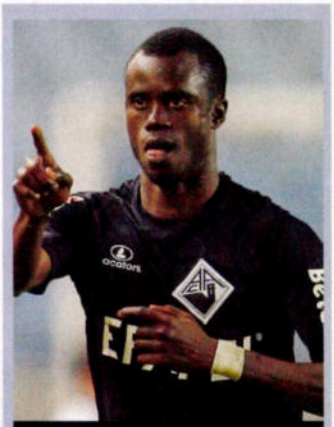
Along with Vaslui, **Gaz Metan Medias** were the biggest beneficiaries of Timisoara's expulsion and they will play in the Europa League. Inspirational coach Cristi Pusztai will be happy to have held on to Brazilian striker Eric de Oliveira, second in the goalscoring charts last term with 15.

Among those battling to beat the drop, **Tirgu Mures** will be boosted by the arrival of experienced midfielder Robert Ilyies from **Brasov**, whose greatest achievement during the summer was to hold on to coach Antonio Conceicao despite an approach from Steaua Bucharest.

Despite finishing bottom last year, **Sportul Studentesc** were spared the drop after Gloria Bistrita were denied a licence for the new season because of accumulated debt and relegated to the third division.

Takayuki Seto, the sole Japanese player in Romanian football, helped preserve **Astra Ploiesti**'s top-flight status, and they will look to finish above cash-strapped **Pandurii Tirgu Jiu**, strugglers **Petrolul Ploiesti** and promoted **Ceahlaul Piatra Neamt**, **Concordia Chiajna**, **Mioveni** and **Vointa Sibiu**.

Radu Timofte


Pace to burn...flying winger Sougou

SIGNING OF THE SUMMER
MODOU SOUGOU (CFR Cluj)
The Senegal international is a pacy right-winger who arrives from Portugal where he has played for Uniao Leiria, Vitoria Setubal and, finally, Academica – where he played under Andre Villas-Boas.

ROMANIA
Otelul

THE COACH

Dorinel MUNTEANU
Age 43 (25.06.68)
Romania's most capped player. Took CFR Cluj to the Intertoto Cup Final in 2005 prior to joining Otelul in 2009.

(All ages as of 01.08.11)

Champions League debutants aim to play fair and square

Stadionul Otelul...can seat a total of 13,500

The club from east Romania makes its Champions League debut this term with club president Marius Stan claiming: "We are a small and honest club who have never deviated from the rules of fair play. I've always thought that when your chance comes, you can win by being honest, straightforward and correct. To try any other way would, in my opinion, violate the basic principles of life."

If that outlook is admirable, the aims of coach Dorinel Munteanu are just as impressive. "If we've got 70 points in the league last season, now I want 71," says the former Romania midfielder.

"In Champions League, I don't want only to play but also to win. I need some more players to have a competition for each position in the team."

GOALKEEPERS

Cristian BRANET
Age 34 (14.07.77)
First choice last term, he is experienced and calm under pressure.

Branko GRAHOVAC (Ser)
Age 28 (08.07.83)
Signed from Serbian club Borac Cacak in January 2010.

Plus: Gabriel **ABRAHAM** (Age 20, 02.03.91)

DEFENDERS

Liviu ANTAL
Age 22 (02.06.89)
Right-sided player who joined the club in June 2009 and made his Romania debut this year.

Sergiu COSTIN
Age 32 (21.11.78)
Club captain, he can play as a centre-back or a defensive midfielder.

Milan PERENDIJA (Ser)
Age 25 (05.01.86)
Central defender who represented Serbia at the Euro Under-19s in 2005.

Cornel RAPA
Age 21 (16.01.90)
Romania right-back with five caps.

Adrian SALAGEANU
Age 28 (09.04.83)
Snapped up from third division Somesul Satu Mare three years ago and made his international debut in February.

Cristian SARGHI
Age 24 (22.02.87)
Romania Under-23 who joined from Politehnica Galati in 2007.

Plus: Marian **CARJA** (Age 24, 03.05.87), Zoran **LJUBINKOVIC** (Ser; Age 29, 04.07.82)

TACTICS

Munteanu has managed to put together a psychologically strong unit from a squad of relatively unknown players. A reliable defence provides a solid foundation but, although he has brought in a couple of new players this season, a second striker would be a very useful addition.

4-2-3-1

MIDFIELDERS

Laurentiu BUS
Age 23 (27.08.87)
Signed from second division Ariesul Turda last season. Scored the winning goal in July's Romanian Super Cup.

Daniel CHAVEZ (Per)
Age 23 (08.01.88)
Played for Club Brugge in Belgium before joining Otelul from Westerlo this summer.

Gabriel GIURGIU
Age 28 (03.09.82)
Returned to Otelul in January 2009 after a miserable time with Rubin Kazan in Russia.

Silviu ILIE
Age 23 (27.06.88)
Otelul's playmaker on the left for the past four years. Three caps for Romania.

Gabriel PARASCHIV
Age 33 (27.03.78)
Attacking midfielder who likes to shoot from distance.

Gabriel VIGLIANTI (Arg)
Age 32 (12.06.79)
The local star, he arrived in 2007 from Bolivian club Bolivar.

Plus: Alexandru **BENGA** (Age 22, 15.06.89), Ioan **FILIP** (Age 22, 20.05.89), Alin **FLORUT** (Age 20, 27.05.91)

FORWARDS

Robert ELEK
Age 23 (13.06.88)
Returned to Otelul in the summer after a year's loan to second division Poli Iasi.

Sorin FRUNZA
Age 33 (29.03.78)
In his second spell with Otelul, he won the league in 2009 with Unirea Urziceni.

John IBEH (Ngr)
Age 25 (16.04.86)
Holds Spanish citizenship and played in Israel and Holland as a youth.

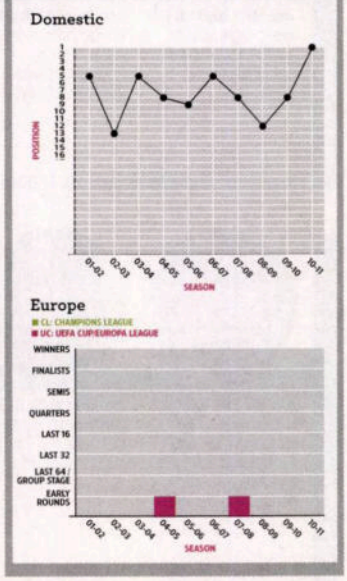
Laurentiu IORGA
Age 23 (17.03.88)
Came up through the club's youth ranks. Capped at Under-21 and Under-23 level.

Marius PENA
Age 26 (02.05.85)
A dangerous predator whose father was a player with Progresul Bucharest and Steaua Bucharest.

Bratislav PUNOSEVAC (Ser)
Age 24 (09.07.87)
A Partizan Belgrade youth-team player who was signed in December from Serbian club Napredak Krusevac.

Plus: Alexandru **AVRAM** (Age 20, 25.04.91), Cosmin **GARLEANU** (Age 22, 07.02.89), Ciprian **MILEA** (Age 27, 12.07.84)

10-YEAR RECORD



ROMANIA
Vaslui

THE COACH

Viorel HIZO
Age 64 (06.02.47)
Nicknamed "Mastiff", for having a voice like thunder and being a strict disciplinarian. Balances attack with well-organised defence.

(All ages as of 01.08.11)

GOALKEEPERS

Vytautas CERNIAUSKAS (Lit)
Age 22 (12.03.89)
Reserve signed from Ekranas in his homeland last year.

Dusan KUCIAK (Slk)
Age 26 (21.05.85)
Solid shot-stopper who was in his country's squad at the World Cup finals.

Plus: Claudiu **PUIA** (Age 24, 06.06.87)

Transfer embargo poses threat to Champions League new boys

Surprise Euro hosts... Vaslui's Municipal Stadium

Vaslui's preparations have been hit badly by a transfer embargo imposed until next spring following a court case with former midfielder Marko Ljubinkovic. Owner Adrian Porumboiu claims the Romanian federation "is not able to set special commissions to solve [the] disputed issues".

Agriculture and food industry magnate Porumboiu has nonetheless promised a record budget, saying: "The people of this area, who have not had many happiness opportunities, fully deserve a successful team playing for them."

Coach Viorel Hizo says of his team's entry into the Champions League at the expense of Timisoara who were expelled from the Romanian top flight: "I can't enjoy Timisoara's relegation, even if I consider Vaslui a better team."

DEFENDERS

Silviu BALACE
Age 32 (11.11.78)
Strong left-sided defender who can also play in midfield.

Gabriel CANU
Age 30 (18.01.81)
Strong in the air, dangerous from set-pieces and a leader on the field.

Pavol FARKAS (Slk)
Age 26 (27.03.85)
Centre-back who gives Hizu a solid alternative option.

HUGO LUZ (Por)
Age 29 (24.02.82)
Clever left-back, once of Porto, he joined Vaslui in 2007.

Zhivko MILANOV (Bul)
Age 26 (15.07.84)
Experienced right-back who spent nine years with Levski Sofia before moving to Romania.

Paul PAPP
Age 21 (11.11.89)
Central defender or right-back who made his international debut, against Ukraine, in February.

Plus: Richard **ANNANG** (Gha; Age 20, 30.04.91), **GLADSTONE** (Bra; Age 25, 29.01.85), Marius **STEFOI** (Age 21, 23.05.90)

TACTICS

Central defenders Canu and young Papp are the foundations which allow Hizo to build an attacking game. Brazilian midfielder Wesley is the most influential player, acting as playmaker as well as scoring his fair share of goals. An extremely skilful attacking line is completed by Sanmartean.

4-2-3-1

MIDFIELDERS

Raul COSTIN
Age 26 (29.01.83)
Right-sided player who is equally good going forward or defending.

GERLEM (Bra)
Age 26 (07.08.84)
Winger who spent some time in Portugal. Joined Vaslui in 2009.

Adrian GHEORGHIU
Age 30 (11.06.81)
Right-footed but usually plays on the left.

Milos PAVLOVIC (Serb)
Age 27 (27.11.83)
Central midfielder who attacks the box. Previously with Radnicki Belgrade and Academica of Portugal.

Lucian SANMARTEAN
Age 31 (13.03.80)
Skilful playmaker who can score spectacular and opportunist goals.

Denis ZMEU (Mol)
Age 26 (08.05.85)
Playmaker who has been with Vaslui since 2006.

Plus: Petar **JOVANOVICI** (Age 28, 12.07.82), Zoran **MILISAVLJEVICI** (Serb; Age 26, 01.11.84)

10-YEAR RECORD

FORWARDS

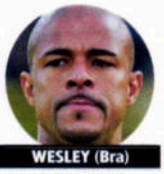
ADAILTON (Bra)
Age 34 (24.01.77)
Has played in Italy for Parma, Verona, Genoa and Bologna, and in France for Paris Saint-Germain.

Yerro BELLO (Ngr)
Age 23 (11.12.87)
Can play all across the front line. Used to play in Israel.

Razvan NEAGU
Age 24 (25.05.87)
Mostly used as an impact substitute.

Christian POUGA (Cam)
Age 25 (19.06.86)
Played in China, Switzerland, Spain and Portugal before joining Vaslui in 2010.

Mike TEMWANJERA (Zim)
Age 29 (21.05.82)
Can play as a lone or second striker. Made his international debut in 2005 and has three caps.



WESLEY (Bra)
Age 30 (10.11.80)
The star of the team and scorer of some decisive goals. Has played in Portugal's top flight.

Plus: Ionut **BALAUR** (Age 22, 06.06.89), Vasile **BUHAESCU** (Age 23, 02.02.88)

RUSSIA

CSKA Moscow

THE COACH

Leonid SLUTSKY
Age 40 (04.05.71)
Often seen as a future national coach, he has been dubbed "the Russian Mourinho" and is strong in terms of tactics and psychology.

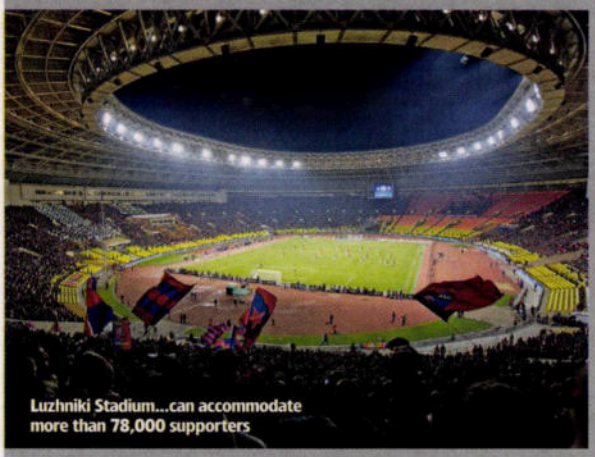
(All ages as of 01.08.11)

GOALKEEPERS

Igor AKINFEEV
Age 25 (08.04.86)
Youth-team product and club captain, he has been Russia's top keeper of the past seven years.

Sergei CHEPCHUGOV
Age 25 (15.07.85)
Impressive enough at Sibir Novosibirsk to be named the best keeper in Russia's second division in 2009, after which he was signed by CSKA.

Army team are Russian league leaders at the summer break



Luzhniki Stadium...can accommodate more than 78,000 supporters

Four points clear at the top of the Russian Premier League before the summer break in June, CSKA supporters are once again recalling the glory period between 2003 and 2006 when the team won the league three times, the Russian Cup twice and the UEFA Cup once under Valery Gazzaev.

The "Red Army" also won the Soviet Top League seven times and the last USSR championship to have been played (in 1991). But having maintained only symbolic ties with the ministry of defence, CSKA's financial clout is diminished and they now rank only sixth in a list of Russian clubs' budgets. Sponsored by the Bashneft oil company, the team's expenditure this season is expected to be about £50million.

DEFENDERS

Alexei BEREZUTSKI
Age 29 (20.06.82)
Unlike his twin, Vasili, he does not have a guaranteed place for CSKA or Russia. An emergency centre-half or wing-back.

Vasili BEREZUTSKI
Age 29 (20.06.82)
Twenty minutes older than Alexei, he has been irreplaceable for club and country for the last few years.

Sergei IGNASHEVICH
Age 31 (14.07.79)
The country's best centre-back, he also scored four goals in this season's first 15 league games.

Kirill NABABKIN
Age 24 (08.09.86)
Right-back who has still to develop his skills, although his place in the starting line-up has been guaranteed recently.

Georgi SCHENNIKOV
Age 20 (27.04.91)
Son of Olympic walking star Mikhail Schennikov, loves attacking down the flank.

Deividas SEMBERAS (Lit)
Age 32 (02.08.78)
Often penalised for his combative style. Has played more Russian Premier League games than any other foreigner.

Plus: Viktor **VASIN** (Age 22, 06.10.88)

TACTICS

Slutsky likes to have a defensive midfielder sat in front of the back four to offer added protection and he has occasionally used a "diamond" formation in the past. One of the midfielders will often join the pairing of Vagner Love and Doumbia to form an impressive attacking trio.

4-3-3

MIDFIELDERS

Evgeni ALDONIN
Age 31 (22.01.80)
Can play in deep midfield or up front. Often used as a sub to consolidate a winning position. Married to a Russian pop star.

Aleksandrs CAUNA (Lat)
Age 23 (19.01.88)
Signed a five-year contract in June, despite playing only three league games due to injury after joining on loan from Latvian side Skonto.

Alan DZAGOEV
Age 21 (17.06.90)
A regular starter for Russia, he has often been left on the bench by Slutsky.

Keisuke HONDA (Jap)
Age 25 (13.06.86)
Japan playmaker who was one of the stars of the 2010 World Cup. A target for Juventus during the summer.

Pavel MAMAEV
Age 22 (17.09.88)
Captain of Russia at junior level. Capable of going forward or defending, he made his full international debut at the end of last year.

Elvir RAHIMIC (Bos)
Age 35 (04.04.76)
Called "Terminator" for his strength in the tackle. Joined from Anzhi Makhachkala in 2001.

Plus: Nika **PILIYEV** (Age 20, 21.03.91)

FORWARDS

Seydou DOUMBIA (IvC)
Age 23 (31.12.87)
Joined CSKA last season and is joint top scorer in the league this term, with 9 goals in 13 games before the 2011 summer break.

Mark GONZALEZ (Chl)
Age 26 (10.07.84)
International left winger. Quick and passes well, but prone to injury.

Tomas NECID (CzR)
Age 21 (13.08.89)
Powerful Czech international who is out of the game for six months after a serious injury in mid-June.

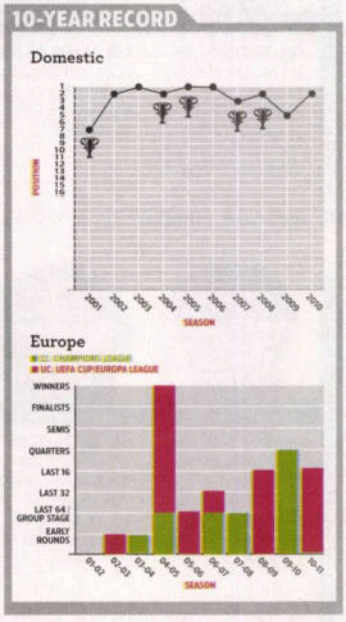
Sekou OLISEH (Lbr)
Age 21 (05.06.90)
Replacement for Vagner Love when he is out of action.

Zoran TOSIC (Ser)
Age 24 (28.04.87)
Winger signed from Manchester United in the summer of 2010.

VAGNER LOVE (Bra)
Age 27 (11.06.84)
Prolific goalscorer who many regard as the best foreign player to have played in the Russian league.

Plus: Chidi **ODIAH** (Ngr; Age 27, 17.12.83)

10-YEAR RECORD



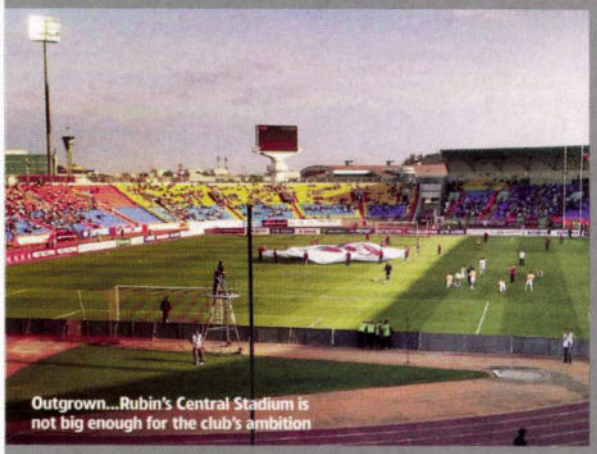
RUSSIA
Rubin Kazan

THE COACH

Kurban BERDYEV
Age 58 (25.08.52)
Wise tactician who has enjoyed the support of the club's owners and fans for over a decade.

(All ages as of 01.08.11)

Twice champions – but only the second biggest team in Kazan



Outgrown...Rubin's Central Stadium is not big enough for the club's ambition

Representing Russia's Muslim republic of Tatarstan, Rubin are the only non-Moscow club to have won successive national titles – in 2008 and 2009.

They have gone from strength to strength since joining the Premier League in 2003 and have impressed in the Champions League, even beating Barcelona 2-1 at Camp Nou in 2009.

Owned by the local government and supported by the republic's business circles, Rubin's budget of £75million is the second highest in Russia, but they are still only the second biggest team in their home city, behind ice hockey's Ak Bars Kazan. With a new 45,000-capacity stadium under construction they need to attract more support.

GOALKEEPERS

Giedrius ARLAUSKIS (Lit)
Age 23 (01.12.87)
Has not looked confident when replacing Ryzhikov.

Sergei RYZHIKOV
Age 30 (19.09.80)
Sensational in Rubin's two title-winning seasons, having joined in 2008. Made national team debut against Qatar in March.

Plus: Yuri **NESTERENKO** (Age 20, 12.06.91)

DEFENDERS

Cristian ANSALDI (Arg)
Age 24 (20.09.86)
Quick international left-back who is good going forward. Turned down a summer move to Zenit.

Salvatore BOCCHETTI (Ita)
Age 24 (30.11.86)
Dangerous in the opposition penalty area at set-pieces. Can play on the left or in the centre.

CESAR NAVAS (Spa)
Age 31 (14.02.80)
Once of Real Madrid, he joined Rubin from Racing Santander in 2009 and became the key figure in the back line.

Vitali KALESHIN
Age 30 (03.10.80)
Right-back who likes to attack. Can also be used in midfield.

Oleg KUZMIN
Age 30 (09.05.81)
Solid right-back. Product of Spartak Moscow's youth academy, he went through a number of Russian clubs before joining Rubin last year.

Roman SHARONOV
Age 34 (08.09.76)
Former team captain who has returned after a long absence with injury and forms a strong defensive partnership with Cesar Navas.

Plus: Solomon **KVIRKVELIA** (Geo; Age 19, 28.06.92), Alexandr **OREKHOV** (Age 27, 29.11.83)

TACTICS

Berdyev, who often plays five at the back, has promised a more attacking outlook this season. However, Rubin's lack of cutting edge has not been helped by the sale of Aleksandr Bukharov to Zenit. The return of Alejandro Dominguez, who left for Valencia in 2010, would help.

4-2-3-1

MIDFIELDERS

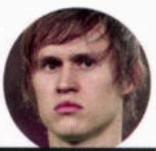
Petr BYSTROV
Age 32 (15.07.79)
Left-winger who can also play in the centre of midfield. Sidelined in 2009 after collapsing with heatstroke in a game.

Alan KASAEV
Age 25 (08.05.86)
Quick and skilful on the left wing, he is a former Under-21 international.

Bibras NATKHO (Isr)
Age 23 (18.02.88)
Israel international bought from Hapoel Tel Aviv in 2010, he cements Rubin's game with Noboa.

Petr NEMOV
Age 27 (18.10.83)
Joined earlier this year from Saturn Moscow Oblast.

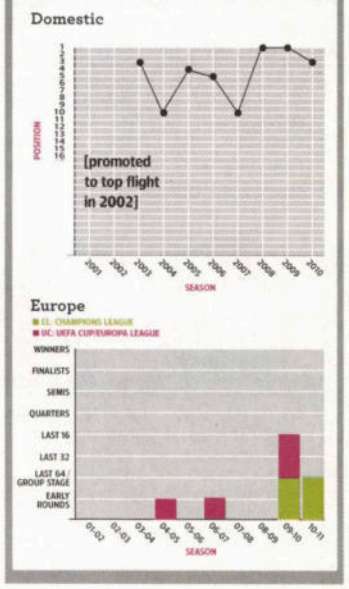
Cristian NOBOA (Ecu)
Age 26 (09.04.85)
Good passer, he takes penalties and free-kicks. Club captain.



Aleksandr RYAZANTSEV
Age 24 (05.09.86)
Winger or playmaker who overcame injuries to make his Russia debut against Cameroon in June.

Plus: Alisher **DZHALILOV** (Age 17; 29.08.93), Sergei **KISLYAK** (Bls; Age 23, 06.08.87), Ruslan **MAKHMUTOV** (Age 20, 27.01.91)

10-YEAR RECORD



FORWARDS

CARLOS EDUARDO (Bra)
Age 24 (18.07.87)
Brazil international bought for a club record £18m from Hoffenheim in 2010. Injured for first half of this season.

Vladimir DYADYUN
Age 23 (12.07.88)
Joined Rubin after an impressive season with Spartak Nalchik, but yet to produce the same quality in front of goal.

Gokdeniz KARADENIZ (Tur)
Age 31 (11.01.80)
Right winger and playmaker who is most effective on the counter-attack, effectively linking up as a second striker.

Igor LEBEDENKO
Age 28 (27.05.83)
Has made a marked improvement recently, but needs to add more goals to his game.

Obafemi MARTINS (Ngr)
Age 26 (28.10.84)
Signed from Wolfsburg, he has just returned from a loan spell in England with Birmingham City.

Alexei MEDVEDEV
Age 34 (05.01.77)
CSKA academy product who played for Dynamo Moscow in the UEFA Cup and Sibir Novosibirsk in the Europa League.

Plus: Alexander **ANTONYUK** (Mol; Age 22, 23.05.89)

RUSSIA

Zenit

THE COACH

Luciano SPALLETTI (Ita)
Age 52 (07.03.59)
Joined in December 2009 and, although he failed to deliver the Champions League, he did manage a league and Cup double.

(All ages as of 01.08.11)

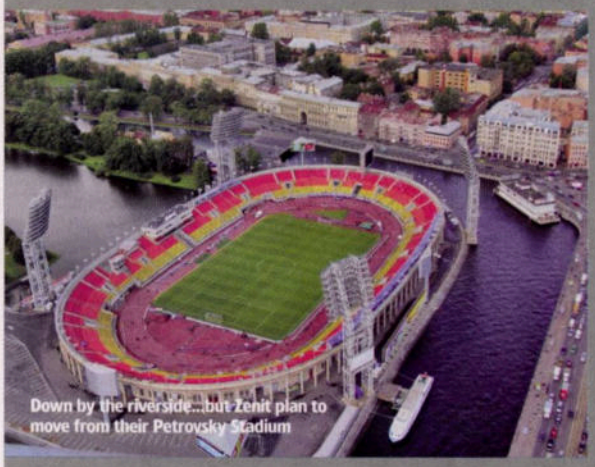
GOALKEEPERS

Vyacheslav MALAFEEV
Age 32 (04.03.79)
Russia's second-choice, Zenit's iconic one-club man lost his wife in a car crash earlier this year.

Yuri ZHEVNOV (Bls)
Age 30 (17.04.81)
Lots of international experience, but not so reliable recently due to a lack of first-team games.

Plus: Dmitri **BORODIN** (Age 33, 08.10.77)

Spalletti sets his sights on the Champions League



Down by the riverside...but Zenit plan to move from their Petrovsky Stadium

With unlimited financial support from the powerful Gazprom company and an estimated annual budget of £100million, the 2008 UEFA Cup and UEFA Super Cup winners have been at the forefront of Russian football since 2007, when they were league champions for the first time since 1984.

Having regained domestic supremacy last year, Zenit were second behind CSKA Moscow in this term's Premier League table before the summer break, but this year they are primarily focused on the Champions League, for which Spalletti was promised new quality signings from western Europe by the club's owners.

A new arena is under construction in St Petersburg to replace the current 22,000-capacity Petrovsky Stadium.

DEFENDERS

Aleksandr ANYUKOV
Age 28 (28.09.82)
Captain and strong attacking right-back who is often limited in his offensive efforts by Spalletti's tactics. A summer target for Blackburn Rovers.

BRUNO ALVES (Por)
Age 29 (27.11.81)
One of Europe's best centre-backs, signed from Porto for £18m after the 2010 World Cup. Good passer and dominant in the air.

Domenico CRISCITO (Ita)
Age 24 (30.12.86)
Left-back who was signed from Genoa in June for £9.8m. Played in all three of Italy's games at last year's World Cup.

Tomas HUBOCAN (Slk)
Age 25 (17.09.85)
Physical strong, equally good at left-back or centre-back.

Nikolas LOMBAERTS (Blg)
Age 26 (20.03.85)
Solid Belgian national team centre-back, strong in the air and dangerous at set-pieces.

Aleksandar LUKOVIC (Ser)
Age 28 (23.10.82)
Serbia international left-back with good dribbling and passing skills. Signed from Udinese after the 2010 World Cup.

Plus: Igor **CHEMINAVA** (Age 20, 23.03.91), Fernando **MEIRA** (Por; Age 33, 05.06.78), Nicolas **PENAILILLO** (Chl; Age 20, 13.06.91)

TACTICS

A strong, creative midfield, led by Danny, ensures a constant flow of deliveries into the penalty area from both flanks and through the middle. The wing-backs, however, are mostly preoccupied with defensive work. The lone striker is often joined by attacking midfielders, as in the case with Lazovic this term.

4-2-3-1

MIDFIELDERS

DANNY (Por)
Age 27 (07.08.83)
Signed from Dynamo Moscow in 2008 for a Russian record £24m, Venezuela-born playmaker is at the hub of Zenit's attacking game.

Igor DENISOV
Age 27 (17.05.84)
Reliable, energetic and unyielding defensive midfielder. Former national Under-21 captain, he stepped up to senior level in 2008.

Szabolcs HUSZTI (Hun)
Age 28 (18.04.83)
Good at set-pieces from both flanks, who won his place in the starting line-up largely due to the absence of others through injury.

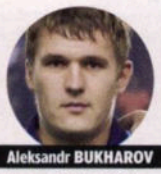
Sergei SEMAK
Age 35 (27.02.76)
Fans' favourite who enjoyed successful spells with CSKA Moscow and Rubin before joining Zenit two years ago.

Roman SHIROKOV
Age 30 (06.06.81)
Playmaker who has been out with a long-standing thigh injury. Known for his sharp remarks on Twitter.

Konstantin ZYRYANOV
Age 33 (05.10.77)
Has lost some pace but retains good vision and ball control. Scored the decisive second goal against Rangers in the 2008 UEFA Cup Final.

Plus: Sergei **PETROV** (Age 20, 02.01.91)

FORWARDS



Aleksandr BUKHAROV
Age 26 (12.03.85)
Powerful but has put on weight since his signing from Rubin Kazan last year and has recently been used mostly as a substitute.

Vladimir BYSTROV
Age 27 (31.01.84)
Right-winger who returned to the club in 2009 after a four-year spell with arch-rivals Spartak Moscow, which still rankles with some Zenit fans.

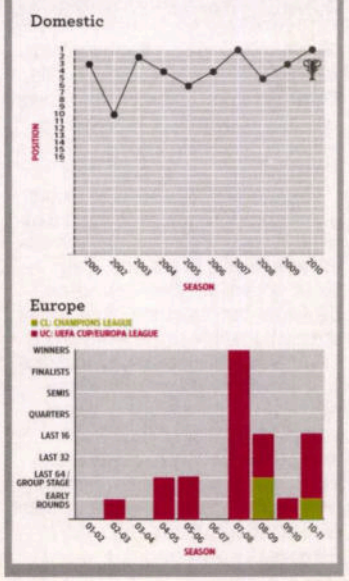
Viktor FAYZULIN
Age 25 (22.04.86)
Reserve who adds speed and power to Zenit's game.

Alexei IONOV
Age 22 (18.02.89)
Youth academy product, the right-winger made his Russia debut in a friendly against Qatar in March.

Aleksandr KERZHAKOV
Age 28 (27.11.82)
Russia striker who has had spells with Sevilla and Dynamo Moscow. Russian Football Union's 2010 player of the year. Owns a restaurant in St Petersburg.

Danko LAZOVIC (Ser)
Age 28 (17.05.83)
Moved up from midfield to cover suspension and injuries and went into the summer break as the Russian Premier League's joint top scorer with nine goals.

10-YEAR RECORD



SCOTLAND

Pressure on Lennon to turn the table

New start...Scott Brown (no8) is mobbed after scoring for Celtic in a pre-season friendly against Melbourne Victory

Key dates

Season starts
July 23, 2011
Season ends
May 2012

Despite failing to stop **Rangers** from winning a third consecutive SPL title, **Celtic** rewarded manager Neil Lennon with a long-term deal. However, he will be all too aware that he can ill afford to lose back-to-back titles.

Most of the ingredients to mount a renewed challenge to Rangers look to be in place. Efforts to lure former loanees Robbie Keane and Craig Bellamy back to Celtic Park fell on deaf ears, but it is at the other end of the pitch that the squad looks short.

After persuading the Home Office to grant robust 20-year-old Kenya midfielder Victor Wanyama a work permit, Lennon has hinted that he may deploy him in central defence. Wanyama, who joined from Belgian club Beerschot, has taken the number 67 shirt, in tribute to Celtic's 1967 European Cup-winning side.

In contrast to previous seasons, **Hearts**' summer recruitments have been sourced locally. John Sutton, from Motherwell, should add presence up front, while boss Jim Jefferies has brought in his former Kilmarnock midfield charges Mehdi Taouil and Jamie Hamill on free transfers. They look well placed to repeat last term's third place, provided owner Vladimir Romanov resists the urge to meddle.

Dundee United, one of the SPL success stories over the last two years, face a much tougher campaign after Craig Conway, Morgaro Gomis and Prince Bauben rejected new deals, leaving Peter Houston to rebuild his midfield from scratch. Striker David Goodwillie remains a Rangers target and emulating last season's fourth place looks a tall order.

Kilmarnock, who punched above their weight to finish fifth, may struggle to compensate for the loss of Taouil, Alexei Eremenko and captain Craig Bryson. Ex-Feyenoord midfielder Danny Buijs looks the pick of the new boys.

Last season's Scottish Cup Final appearance disguised **Motherwell**'s growing frailties. Stuart McCall, operating on a shoestring, has signed his former Sheffield United charge Nicky Laws to bolster midfield, but the exits of Francis Jeffers and Sutton have left the attack depleted.

Despite much talk of financial meltdown, **Aberdeen** have been as active as any SPL club in the market this summer. Craig Brown has shipped in some experienced players including French defender Youl Mawene and Coventry City midfielder Isaac Osbourne, while Manchester City's young Colombian goalkeeper David Gonzalez is on a six-month loan.

Shoestring... McCall

Hibernian have gone back to the future by recruiting former favourites, winger Ivan Sproule and striker Garry O'Connor, but it will take a huge revamp to turn things around.

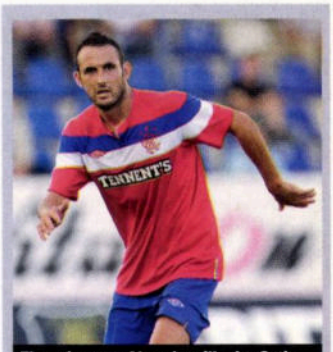
St Johnstone had the meanest defence outside the Old Firm last season, but also the SPL's poorest scoring record with just 23 goals. Derek McInnes has brought in Dundee top scorer Sean Higgins and Carl Finnigan from Falkirk to help bolster his attack.

Despite leading **Inverness Caledonian Thistle** to a strong finish in their first season back in the top flight, Terry Butcher has shipped out half of his squad, including top scorer Adam Rooney to Birmingham City. Much will depend on captain Richie Foran's ability to bond with his new French strike partner Gregory Tade.

Danny Lennon has turned to ex-Scotland players Gary Teale and Steven Thompson to beef up defence and attack respectively for **St Mirren** as he bids to avoid a relegation fight.

Back in the top flight after a four-year hiatus, **Dunfermline** face an almighty battle to stay up. Manager Jim McIntyre at least has two solid keepers in Paul Gallacher and Chris Smith, but whoever is chosen between the sticks will be very busy.

Dan Brennan


Three in one...Almeria will miss Ortiz

SIGNING OF THE SUMMER
JUAN MANUEL ORTIZ (Rangers)
Spanish side Almeria claim they will need three players to replace the pacy midfielder. The former Atletico Madrid rookie can operate in the centre or on either flank, and has even been known to fill in at full-back. For a club with a squad as lean as Rangers, the 29-year old's versatility should prove a major boost.

SCOTLAND
Rangers

THE MANAGER

Ally McCOIST
Age 48 (24.09.62)
Rangers' all-time top scorer was groomed for his new role over four years as assistant to Walter Smith.

(All ages as of 01.08.11)

GOALKEEPERS

Neil ALEXANDER
Age 33 (10.03.78)
Experienced former Cardiff City and Scotland keeper will continue as back-up to McGregor with regular outings in the League Cup.

Allan McGREGOR
Age 29 (31.01.82)
Regularly touted for a move to England, Scotland's No1 gave the club a massive boost by signing a new five-year deal.

Muted reaction to the champions' takeover saga

No holds barred...Ibrox Stadium has witnessed a boardroom coup

The SPL champions' takeover saga finally ended in May when owner Sir David Murray sold his 85.3 per cent controlling stake to venture capitalist Craig Whyte for £1. Whyte has agreed to clear the club's £21 million debt and promised a cash injection, but a bloody boardroom coup – and concerns over the true extent of the new owner's financial clout – mean the joy has been muted so far.

Whyte has moved to tie down several key players on long-term deals, but will have to get his wallet out if new manager Ally McCoist is to fend off Celtic's challenge.

Ex-Scottish FA chief executive and one-time Rangers forward Gordon Smith has been named as the club's director of football. Having also been an agent, he is likely to take a key role in transfer strategy.

DEFENDERS

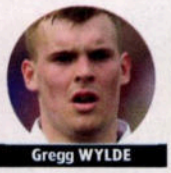
Madjid BOUGHERRA (Alg)
Age 29 (07.10.82)
Centre-back who is a big favourite for his committed style since joining from Charlton Athletic in 2008.

Kirk BROADFOOT
Age 26 (08.08.84)
Versatile former St Mirren defender who has recently found opportunities limited by injury.

Sasa PAPAC (Bos)
Age 31 (07.02.80)
One of the club's most consistent performers since his conversion from central defender to left-back.

David WEIR
Age 41 (10.05.70)
Captain who continues to defy the clock, penning a new 12-month deal this summer.

Steven WHITTAKER
Age 27 (16.06.84)
The right-back has committed his future to Ibrox, signing a new five-year deal, despite a lucrative offer from Turkish club Bursaspor.



Gregg WYLDE
Age 20 (23.03.91)
Home-grown left-back who broke into the squad last term and could challenge Papac this season.

Plus: Darren **COLE** (Age 19, 03.01.92), Jordan **McMILLAN** (Age 22, 16.10.88)

TACTICS

McCoist should be less averse to taking a risk than his predecessor Smith, but don't expect a tactical revolution. Davis is the creative fulcrum, while great things are expected of Ness. The ability of Lafferty and Naismith to support a lone striker – probabaly Jelavic – is key.

4-5-1

MIDFIELDERS

Steven DAVIS (NI)
Age 26 (01.01.85)
Rangers' most influential performer in recent campaigns, Northern Ireland's captain.

Maurice EDU (USA)
Age 25 (18.04.86)
Likes to get forward but can also operate at right-back or in central defence.

John FLECK
Age 19 (24.08.91)
Attacking midfielder who has a suspect temperament. Fourth season in the first-team squad.

Lee McCULLOCH
Age 33 (14.05.78)
Injury-plagued international, who has played in virtually every position but now mainly occupies the holding role.

Jamie NESS
Age 20 (02.03.91)
Athletic central midfielder and the pick of the current crop of youngsters emerging at Ibrox.

Juan Manuel ORTIZ (Spa)
Age 29 (01.03.82)
New recruit from Almeria who can operate anywhere across the middle, or as a makeshift full-back.

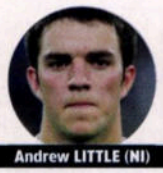
Plus: Kyle **HUTTON** (Age 20, 15.02.91), Salim **KERKAR** (Alg; Age 23, 04.08.87)

FORWARDS

David HEALY (NI)
Age 31 (05.08.79)
Arrived on a short-term deal in January and has extended for another year.

Nikica JELAVIC (Cro)
Age 25 (27.08.85)
Signed from Rapid Vienna, he was an instant hit with 16 goals from 23 games last season.

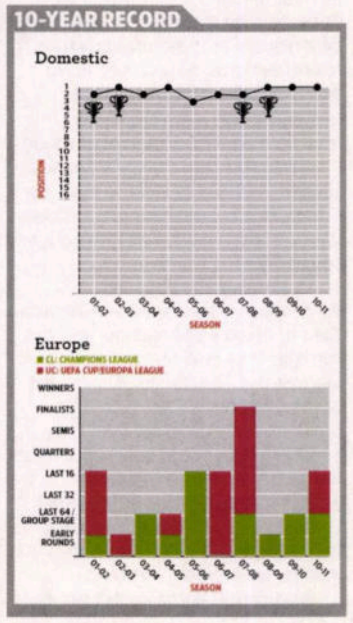
Kyle LAFFERTY (NI)
Age 23 (16.09.87)
Towering Northern Ireland international who scores less than he should.



Andrew LITTLE (NI)
Age 22 (12.05.89)
Made his debut at international level before his Rangers breakthrough.

Steven NAISMITH
Age 24 (14.09.86)
Originally a centre-forward, the Scotland international has been recast as a left-sided midfielder.

10-YEAR RECORD



SERBIA

Partizan set to continue their dominance over Red Star

New challenge...Red Star's Nikola Mikic in action against Partizan last season

Key dates

Season starts
August 13, 2011

Season ends
May 20, 2012

After winning four league titles in a row, **Partizan** will start this season as clear favourites. But that's not because they managed to keep their best players or to sign spectacular reinforcements; it has more to do with the fact that their only real rivals, Red Star, are unlikely to revamp their rather mediocre squad.

Given Partizan's healthy financial situation, thanks to income from the Champions League and player sales, they will again have a much stronger squad than their arch-rivals.

In January, they banked £3.5million from the sale of Brazilian Cleo to China's Guangzhou, and this summer they sold Stefan Savic to Manchester City. While 20 per cent of the £6m fee will go to Savic's previous club BSK Borca, and another 20 per cent to his agent, the remainder is still big money in Serbian football. Partizan also sold Ljubomir Fejsa to Olympiakos but had yet to conclude a deal with Vitesse for Radosav Petrovic.

As a result, Partizan had plenty of money for new players. Ivan Ivanov, a central defender for Bulgaria's national team, arrived from Alanya Vladikavkaz and left-sided defender or midfielder Vladimir Volkov came in from Sheriff Moldova. Central midfielder Sasa Markovic, a Serbia Under-21 international, arrived from OFK Belgrade, while striker Eduardo, who is arguably a better player than Cleo, was signed from Brazil's Sao Caetano. Striker Vladimir Jovancic also arrived from Rad Belgrade.

Another key player who won't be around this season is veteran defender Mladen Krstajic, who has retired and was appointed as Partizan's new sports director.

Partizan's ambitions remain unchanged: to win silverware on the domestic front and to try to qualify for the Champions League group stage. Meanwhile, city rivals **Red Star** are a shadow of the once successful and powerful club.

The arrival of new coach Robert Prosinecki at Red Star last winter, was a bold move, but they lack the financial power to support their coach. In addition, it doesn't help that the club is in constant battle with the Serbian FA and recently launched a bid to replace FA boss Tomislav Karadzic.

On top of everything Red Star were also unlucky when new signing Vinicius Pacheco, a Brazilian attacking midfielder, suffered a double fracture of his left leg in a warm-up game and will be out until the end of the year. Red Star's other new signings were Brazilian striker Bruno Mezenga, midfielder Milos Dimitrijevic from Rad Belgrade and central midfielder Nenad Kovacevic, the former Serbia international who ended his career with Lens and arrived on a free transfer.

As for their exports, Red Star did raise just under £1m from the sale of captain and right-back Pavle Ninkov to Toulouse. Ognjen Koroman (Krylya Sovietov), Aleksandar Jevtic (Jiangsu) and Sasa Stamenkovic (Neftchi Baku) also left the club during the summer.

No other club has any chance of joining the title race, not even **Vojvodina**, who beat Partizan home and away last season. They lost coach Zoran Milinkovic, who unexpectedly quit – officially for "private reasons" – and was replaced by Ljubomir Ristovski from Spartak Subotica. Vojvodina also saw the departure of a number of key players over the summer, including goalkeeper and captain Zeljko Brkic (Udinese) and young striker Aleksandar Katai (Olympiakos).

Rad Belgrade, who last season finished fourth, also look weakened after the departure of goalkeeper Milan Borjan (Sivasspor), right-back Aleksandar Todorovski (Polonia Warsaw), playmaker Milos Dimitrijevic (Red Star) and attacker Vladimir Jovancic (Partizan)

Vojvodina and Rad Belgrade will chase a place in the Europa League qualifiers, along with **Spartak Subotica** and **Sloboda Point Sevojno**.

OFK Belgrade also sold some of their best players and will be one of the youngest teams in the league. At least they kept highly-rated coach Dejan Djurdjevic.

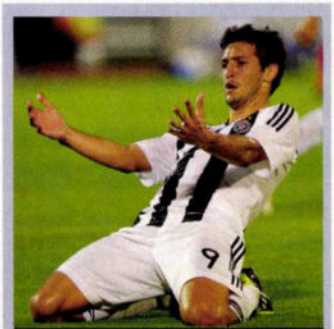
Javor, **Borac**, **Smederevo** and **Jagodina** will all be happy to avoid being drawn into a relegation battle, which is expected to feature **BSK**, **Metalac**, **Hajduk Kula** and newly-promoted **Radnicki 1923**.

The other promoted team was supposed to be BASK Belgrade, one of Serbia's oldest clubs, founded in 1903, who finished first in the Prva Liga but decided not to go up. BASK chairman Bojan Radovanovic made a deal with third-placed **Novi Pazar** from south Serbia who have never played in the top flight and offered them their slot in the top division.

Radovanovic denied that he sold Novi Pazar a top-flight place, but it seems that he has done just that.

Relegated Indjija had claimed that they should be allowed to stay up, but the FA decided in favour of Novi Pazar, arguing that the region of south Serbia doesn't have a top-flight club. But, as unhappy Indjija officials rightly pointed out, it was a decision motivated by political and financial interests. As for BASK, they were punished with relegation to the third tier.

Vladimir Novak


Choice...Eduardo picked Partizan

SIGNING OF THE SUMMER
EDUARDO
(Partizan Belgrade)
The 24-year-old left-footed Brazilian attacker was originally targeted by Red Star, before eventually leaving Sao Caetano for Partizan.

The cost of catching big two is a price La Liga can ill afford

Key dates

Season starts
August 20, 2011
Season ends
May 13, 2012

Like two immense superpowers, **Real Madrid** and **Barcelona** keep on piling up the arms in the race to outdo each other. Football may never have seen two squads like this head-to-head before and the battle looks set to be fascinating. It may also turn downright nasty again. The tension of those four *clasicos* in 18 days has still not subsided altogether, with Barca president Sandro Rosell making more accusations against Real, and a renewal of hostilities is already upon us. The season starts with the two-legged Super Cup – and for the first time in over a decade it will be the big two who meet in August.

Jose Mourinho has promised that his second season will be better than a first in which Madrid reached the semi-final of the Champions League, finished runners-up in La Liga and won the Spanish Cup. The problem for him is that to do so he must, of course, overthrow a Barcelona team that can now be judged among the very best there has been. Barcelona, in turn, know that the challenge will be stronger than ever before. After a season that ended with a league and European Cup double – the latter clinched with a virtually flawless display against Manchester United – Barca still recognise mistakes were made and improvements needed.

For both clubs, the pursuit of perfection is as relentless as it is costly. For others, the name of the game is survival.

Below the glamour and the sheer talent of the big two, Spanish football is in crisis.

Last season, third-placed **Valencia** were 21 points behind Madrid – and that was an improvement on the previous season. Their president Manolo Llorente talked of the need to "be closer" to the big two this season; but competing with them is impossible. That is a football reality and an economic one too. Madrid and Barcelona earn more than three times what Valencia do in TV revenue annually and 10 times that of Racing Santander.

As Sevilla president Jose Maria del Nido has noted: "We're chasing third place because of the adulteration of the league." The reality, Del Nido added, is that "18 teams can't compete for the league".

Worse, it is not just about competing to win the league – it is about not going under. The Spanish players' union calculates that their members are owed well over £25million in unpaid wages, the overall debt of the game in Spain is £3.5billion, and 21 clubs have been in administration, with 11 still there. Real Madrid and Barcelona keep on building as they search to obliterate each other. They have already obliterated the rest.

So who are the candidates for the race for third place? The two other Champions League qualifiers, Valencia and **Villarreal**, have every chance to repeat their success, but this may depend on their ability to hang on to the majority of their top performers.

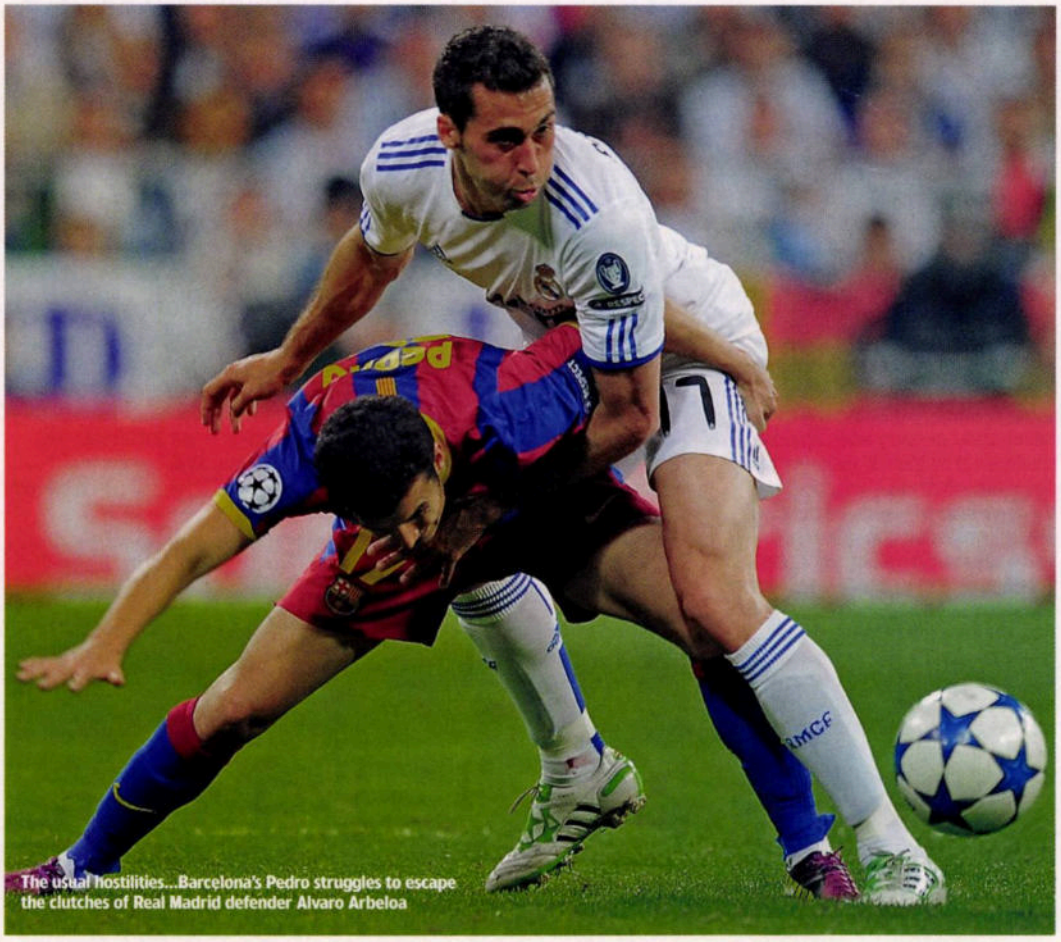
Tough task... Atletico Madrid coach Manzano

Athletic Bilbao's Basque-only policy always guarantees a certain degree of stability and there is real optimism that they can improve on last season's Europa League qualification. Traditionally very direct, tough and aggressive, they actually now have a team built for a more technical approach and have already recruited the impressive Ander Herrera from Real Zaragoza. The major unknown is how eccentric Argentinian coach Marcelo Bielsa will fill the shoes of Joaquin Caparros.

Sevilla continue to search for their missing identity. The miraculous signings seem to be drying up – curiously, the more they spend, the worse their new players are – and there has been a lack of continuity with the coaches. There are reasons to be optimistic though: Marcelino has taken over as boss, Alvaro Negredo had an exceptional end to last season, and the arrival of Ivan Rakitic finally brought control and creativity to midfield. Manu Del Moral and Piotr Trochowski are interesting signings too.

The optimism is certainly overflowing at **Malaga**, now owned by Sheikh Al Thani. Spearheaded by the goals of Julio Baptista and the masterful guidance of Manuel Pellegrini, they enjoyed a wonderful second half of last season, suggesting a realistic challenge for a European spot this time around...but they have not been satisfied with that. Almost £26m was spent in signings in June alone, on Ruud Van Nistelrooy, Diego Buonanotte, Nacho Monreal, Joris Mathijsen and Jeremy Toulalan.

Getafe, who will not, after all, be


The usual hostilities...Barcelona's Pedro struggles to escape the clutches of Real Madrid defender Alvaro Arbeloa

SPAIN

Sevilla signing... Trochowski

called Team Dubai, are another team with rich Arab owners – even if the reported £70m deal does not formally come into effect until next summer. But those that anticipated significant investment and subsequent success have so far been left disappointed. Something does not quite fit. Rather than buying players, Getafe have been selling: Manu, Juan Albon, Derek Boateng and Dani Parejo have all departed with next to nothing spent on signings. The good news is that new coach Luis Garcia is used to working on the tightest of budgets.

In direct contrast, **Espanyol** were in a Champions League place midway through last season but endured a dreadful second half to the campaign and ended up in eighth. Some fans were critical but, in truth, they had found their level. Two winter departures did not help and the subsequent sales of Jose Callejon and Javier Chica have weakened them further. Mauricio Pochettino is a bright and ambitious coach and the youth system continues to produce sufficient talent to survive, but greater ambitions appear unlikely.

Another side who fell away badly last term were **Mallorca**. Having spent much of the season chasing a European place, they suddenly found themselves within a goal of going down on the final day. Question marks still hang over coach Michael Laudrup and although the club is in the best shape it's been for over a decade – thanks to a takeover by a consortium led by Lorenzo Serra Ferrer, and a steady stream of youth teamers now coming through – the economic reality still bites.

A highly unpleasant form of reality is also enveloping **Atletico Madrid**. First the coach went and then, one by one, so did players such as David De Gea and Tomas Ujfalusi. In less than a year the club's Europa League triumph was completely forgotten. Now, any kind of success feels impossible. They have welcomed back Gregorio Manzano as coach but it is hard to avoid the feeling that this is a club falling apart at every level. As usual, the fans will be there in their thousands. But what will they be watching?

A notable success for **Sporting Gijon** last season was when they ended Mourinho's nine-year unbeaten home league record with a 1-0 victory in the Bernabeu. Manolo Preciado's side survived a poor start to the season to secure their top-flight status with a couple of weeks to spare. Defensively tough, Alberto Botia has been vitally important, as have the fans at El Molinon and, unusually for Spain, away from home. The departure of Diego Castro to Getafe, though, is a huge blow.

For **Levante**, simply surviving the drop was something of a miracle. The club has gone four years without spending a Euro on a player and they managed to defy the odds once again with a team of aged misfits, has-beens and never-really-weres. Now, they have lost Luis Garcia, the coach who made it all possible, working his motivational magic. Lots of players have left too and new boss Juan Ignacio Martinez, working with the smallest budget in the league, knows that survival will be tough.

Another team who pulled off an unlikely escape act were **Osasuna**, but it is hard to avoid the conclusion that one day relegation will catch up with them. There is little cash and now Josetxo and Monreal have gone too. However, the spirit of the club, embodied in Javier Camunas' astonishing assist against Sevilla in the dying minutes of the penultimate week, lives on. Punched in the head and bleeding, he carried on to provide a vital goal that clinched survival.

Survival on the final day was not enough to keep Martin Lasarte in the coach's job at **Real Sociedad** and he has been replaced by Philippe Montanier at Anoeta. A brilliant start to the season was followed by a collapse and they have lost Diego Rivas. A young, largely home-produced squad provides identity and is led by Mikel Aranburu and the exceptional Xabi Prieto.

When Ali Syed arrived as the new owner of **Racing Santander** last season he was hailed as a saviour. Instead, he has disappeared and the club have descended into a worrying process of decomposition with arguments over ownership, a coach quitting and unpaid players desperate for a way out. One chink of light came with appointment of former Valencia boss Hector Cuper on a season-long contract but this was countered by the news that the club had gone into administration with reported debts of over £29m. The crisis continues and the trapdoor looms.

Having avoided relegation last term with a 2-1 victory over Levante on the final day, **Real Zaragoza** are another club with huge financial problems. With Herrera, one of the stars of Spain's Euro Under-21 triumph in Denmark this summer, having already left, coach Javier Aguirre faces another battle against the drop this term.

Strangely enough, all three of the promoted sides made it out of the second division despite the millstone of administration.

The return of **Real Betis** will be a welcome addition to La Liga. They are a team with a huge fan base and an important history. After years of presidential mismanagement – and accusations of even worse – administration was the only way out and their capacity to compete in the top flight will be limited, although Pepe Mel is an astute coach who connects well with his players.

Rayo Vallecano join them back in the top flight having easily won promotion from the second division – but with no thanks to the Ruiz Mateos family who owned the club. Last season was marked by protests by unpaid players and, in the end, the family were forced out as Rayo went into administration. The impressive Jose Ramon Sandoval continues as coach but those players that can find buyers are already heading for the exit door.

Thirty-five years after they were relegated, **Granada** are back in La Liga, thanks largely to the support of Italian club Udinese. Quique Pina, Granada's president and chief executive, was working at Udinese before taking over at the financially-stricken club and 12 members of the Granada first-team squad came in on loan from the Serie A club, who have also provided economic assistance. The question is will Italian cast-offs be good enough at La Liga level?

Sid Lowe

Good to be back...Van Nistelrooy acknowledges the Malaga fans

SIGNING OF THE SUMMER
RUUD VAN NISTELROOY
(Malaga)
The prolific former Real Madrid and Holland striker, who is now 35, has signed a one-year deal to return to La Liga after a season-and-a-half in Germany with Hamburg.

SPAIN

Barcelona

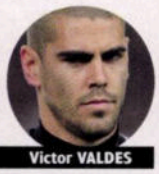
THE COACH

Pep GUARDIOLA
Age 40 (18.01.71)
A European Cup-winner with Barcelona in 1992. Replaced Frank Rijkaard as coach in June 2008 after a year in charge of Barca B.

(All ages as of 01.08.11)

GOALKEEPERS

Jose PINTO
Age 35 (08.11.75)
Reserve who has only played a handful of games. Banned from 2011 Champions League Final for indiscipline on bench during the semi-final.



Victor VALDES
Age 29 (14.01.82)
Youth-team product who has played 11 times for Catalonia and three games for Spain. Made his Barca debut in 2002.

Barca aim to get even better as the opposition strengthens

More than a club... the Camp Nou

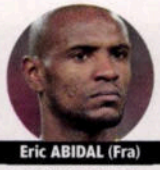
Three league titles and two European Cups in three seasons. Surely it's a case of "if it ain't broke, don't fix it"?

Well, not exactly. Guardiola is convinced that not only does he have to keep the motivation high, his team must constantly evolve and improve to keep on succeeding.

However, the challenge is getting harder as every opponent's desire to stop his team increases. Everyone has studied Barcelona and sought formulas to short-circuit them. Barca must therefore stay a step ahead, especially in a six-competition season with a European Championship at the end.

Barcelona's squad is small and injuries are inevitable, hence the signing of Alexis Sanchez and the pursuit of Fabregas.

DEFENDERS



Eric ABIDAL (Fra)
Age 31 (11.09.79)
France left-back who can also play in the centre. Recently returned to action after the removal of a tumour from his liver.

ADRIANO (Bra)
Age 26 (26.10.84)
Utility reserve who can play in a number of positions in defence and midfield.

DANI ALVES (Bra)
Age 28 (06.05.83)
Brazil international right-back who loves to rampage forward and join the attack. Signed from Sevilla in 2008 for £30m.

MAXWELL (Bra)
Age 29 (27.08.81)
Left-back who has been a reserve since joining from Inter in 2009.

Gerard PIQUE
Age 24 (02.02.87)
Came through the Barca youth system but signed with Manchester United before returning to Barca in 2008.

Carles PUYOL
Age 33 (13.04.78)
Shaggy-haired captain who made his Barcelona debut in 1999. A European and world champion with Spain.

TACTICS

Barcelona's tactics are both obvious and unfathomable at the same time. Guardiola is a perfectionist whose tweaks are often barely perceptible. Possession and quick recovery of the ball will be the foundation stone, but variations will be introduced. Sanchez's pace and trickery offer a different direction.

4-3-3

MIDFIELDERS

Sergio BUSQUETS
Age 22 (16.07.88)
Defensive midfielder who can also drop back into defence. His father, Carles, was a Barca keeper in the 1990s.

Andres INIESTA
Age 27 (11.05.84)
Softly spoken, hugely influential World Cup-winner who played a deeper role last season. Barca debut in 2002.

Seydou KEITA (Mli)
Age 31 (16.01.80)
Mali international who is mostly used as a substitute to consolidate a winning position. Signed from Sevilla in 2008.

Javier MASCHERANO (Arg)
Age 26 (08.06.84)
Captain of Argentina, signed from Liverpool last summer. Has been used as an emergency centre-back.

THIAGO ALCANTARA
Age 20 (11.04.91)
Son of former Brazil international Mazinho. One of the stars of Spain's Euro Under-21 victory this summer.

XAVI
Age 31 (25.01.80)
World Soccer's 2010 World Player of the Year. A world and European champion with Spain. Barca debut in 1998.

FORWARDS

Ibrahim AFFELAY (Hol)
Age 25 (02.04.86)
Holland international of Moroccan descent who was signed from PSV in January 2011. Mostly used as an impact sub.

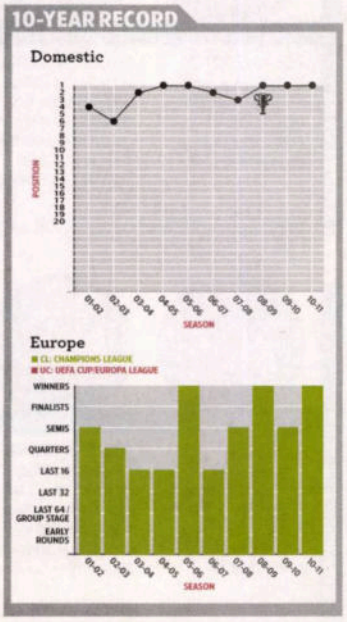
Lionel MESSI (Arg)
Age 23 (24.06.87)
The world's best player scored more than 50 goals in all competitions last season. Moved to Barcelona as a teen.

PEDRO
Age 23 (28.07.87)
Spain international, promoted from Barca B in 2008. Last year he became the first player to score in six competitions.

Alexis SANCHEZ (Chl)
Age 22 (19.12.88)
Signed from Udinese in the summer for a fee reported to be around £23m. Won his 40th cap for Chile at the Copa America.

David VILLA
Age 29 (03.12.81)
A prolific goalscorer for Valencia and Spain before he joined Barcelona in a £34m deal last summer.

10-YEAR RECORD



SPAIN

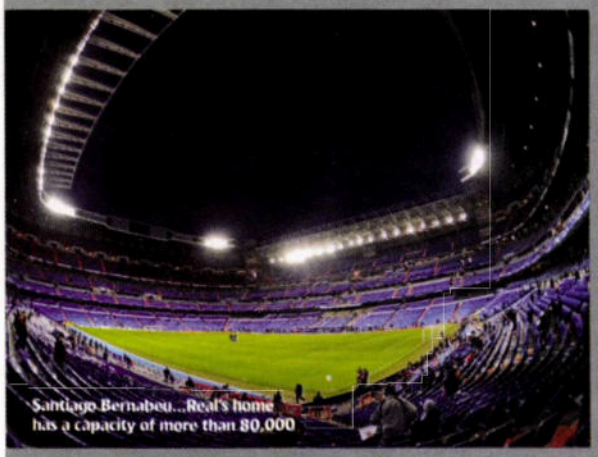
Real Madrid

THE COACH

Jose MOURINHO (Por)
Age 48 (26.01.63)
Controversial but gifted, he is never far from the headlines. A domestic or European title will be his minimum target.

(All ages as of 01.08.11)

Mourinho determined to push Barcelona even harder



Santiago Bernabeu...Real's home has a capacity of more than 80,000

Last season there were referees, fixtures and even UNICEF. This season there can be no excuses for Madrid's mercurial coach. Mourinho's complaints met with some sympathy among Madrid fans but now he must deliver La Liga or the Champions League after switching his discourse to a promise that his teams are always better in the second season – which indeed they are.

Expect Madrid to keep up the pressure on Barcelona, both on and off the pitch. With another pre-season in which to work and a new striker (Brazilian sharpshooter Neymar was among the early contenders) to call upon, Real Madrid should be even stronger than they were last campaign. And, for all the talk of Barcelona, that was very strong indeed.

GOALKEEPERS

Antonio ADAN
Age 24 (13.05.87)
Reserve keeper and academy product who still plays for Real's B team.

Iker CASILLAS
Age 30 (20.05.81)
One of the world's best keepers, Spain's World Cup-winning captain and Madrid's undisputed number one since 1999.

DEFENDERS

Alvaro ARBELOA
Age 29 (17.01.83)
Right-footed full-back who can play on either flank. Began his career with Real before spells at Deportivo La Coruna and Liverpool.

Ricardo CARVALHO (Por)
Age 33 (18.05.78)
Calm, composed and very experienced central defender who also played under Mourinho at Porto and Chelsea.

Fabio COENTRAO (Por)
Age 23 (11.03.88)
Attacking left-back with excellent close control. Signed from Benfica during the summer for an estimated £26m.

PEPE (Por)
Age 28 (26.02.83)
Tough-tackling, Brazil-born centre-back. Became a Portuguese national in 2007.

SERGIO RAMOS
Age 25 (30.03.86)
One of the world's top right-backs, he was originally signed from Sevilla in 2005 as a central defender. Also a mainstay of the national team.

Raphael VARANE (Fra)
Age 18 (25.04.93)
Promising France Under-21 who signed from Lens in the summer. Equally at home as sweeper or centre-back.

Plus: Raul **ALBIOL** (Age 25, 04.09.85)

TACTICS

The arrivals of Sahin and Altintop hinted that Madrid might change formation this season. Last year, Mourinho switched between a 4-2-3-1 and a 4-3-3 in which Pepe acted as a raiding midfielder to stop Messi. Expect a 4-3-3 this season, but, as ever with Mourinho, there are likely to be plenty of variations.

4-3-3

MIDFIELDERS

Xabi ALONSO
Age 29 (25.11.11)
Cultured and hard-working playmaker with an eye for a pass as well as an explosive shot.

Hamit ALTINTOP (Tur)
Age 28 (08.12.82)
Versatile performer who can play right across the middle, he was picked up in May on a free transfer from Bayern Munich.

Sami KHEDIRA (Ger)
Age 24 (04.04.87)
Dynamic central midfielder who was signed from Stuttgart after some impressive displays at the 2010 World Cup.

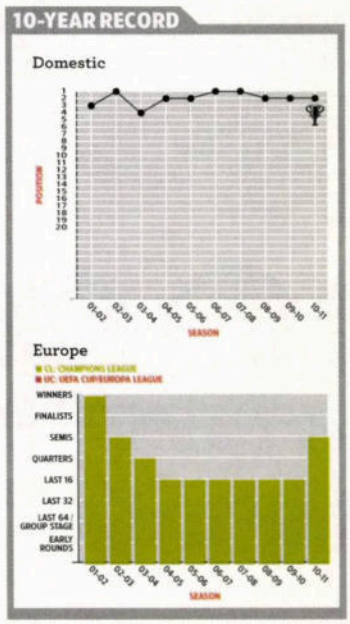
MARCELO
Age 23 (12.05.88)
Pacey left-back who is likely to be employed further up the field following the arrival of Coentrao.

Mesut OZIL (Ger)
Age 22 (15.10.88)
Arrived at the Bernebau in 2010. Credited with 25 assists last season.

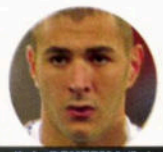
Nuri SAHIN (Tur)
Age 22 (05.09.88)
Last season's player of the year in Germany, where he inspired Borussia Dortmund to the Bundesliga title.

Plus: Lassana **DIARRA** (Fra; Age 26, 10.03.85). Esteban **GRANERO** (Age 24, 02.07.87)

10-YEAR RECORD



FORWARDS



Karim BENZEMA (Fra)
Age 23 (19.12.87)
Powerful and instinctive goalscorer. The technically gifted, France international may be sacrificed for a new attacking signing.

Jose CALLEJON
Age 24 (11.02.87)
Winger who made his way through the Madrid youth ranks before moving to Espanyol. Re-signed this summer.

Angel DI MARIA (Arg)
Age 23 (14.02.88)
Can play on the wing or as a central striker. Enjoyed a successful debut season last term after arriving from Benfica.

Gonzalo HIGUAIN (Arg)
Age 23 (10.12.87)
Free-scoring, France-born, Argentina international who missed much of last-season with a back injury.

KAKA (Bra)
Age 29 (22.04.82)
Supremely gited attacking midfielder or secondary striker who has been hampered by injury since his arrival from Milan in 2009.

Cristiano RONALDO (Por)
Age 26 (05.02.85)
Winger-turned-striker, the world's most expensive player, he enjoyed a sensational season up front last term, scoring 53 times.

Plus: Sergio **CANALES** (Age 20, 16.02.91)

SPAIN
Valencia

THE COACH

Unai EMERY
Age 39 (03.11.71)
One of Spain's brightest young coaches, he joined Valencia in 2008 from Almeria.

(All ages as of 01.08.11)

GOALKEEPERS

DIEGO ALVES (Bra)
Age 26 (24.06.85)
Signed from Almeria this summer and will start the season as first choice.

Vicente GUAITA
Age 24 (18.03.87)
Promising keeper but Emery seems reluctant to give him his break.

Methodical Emery showing there is life after the Davids

Mestalla stadium...holds 55,000

Valencia responded remarkably well to last summer's departure of David Villa and David Silva, with Unai Emery building a strong, quick side that was the most consistent in Spain outside of Madrid and Barcelona – and twice caused Barcelona significant problems. It still wasn't consistent enough for some Valencia fans, though, as they watched their side knocked out of the Champions League and fail to progress in the Copa del Rey.

Emery's methodical approach does not always delight players but he renewed his contract despite doubts about his future. Doubts remain too about the continuity of those players who have stepped into Villa and Silva's shoes. Can Valencia cope with more departures, with Mata the latest to be linked with a move?

DEFENDERS

BRUNO Saltor
Age 30 (01.10.80)
Experienced right-back who played for Emery at Almeria.

Hedwiges MADURO (Hol)
Age 26 (13.02.85)
Centre-back or defensive midfielder whose international career has stalled in the past few years.

Jeremy MATHIEU (Fra)
Age 28 (29.10.83)
Left-back who has been a regular since joining from Toulouse in 2009.

MIGUEL (Por)
Age 31 (04.01.80)
Right-back who lost his place last season.

Adil RAMI (Fra)
Age 25 (27.12.85)
France international centre-back of Moroccan descent who joined from French champions Lille this summer.

RICARDO COSTA (Por)
Age 30 (16.05.81)
Centre-back who established his place in the first team last season after spells in Germany (Wolfsburg) and France (Lille).

Plus: Angel **DEALBERT** (Age 28, 01.01.83)

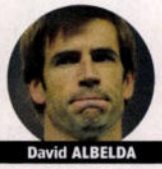
TACTICS

Emery is one of the most tactical coaches in Spain, forever shifting things and working through every eventuality with his team. Can move from a basic 4-2-3-1 to a 4-4-2 with two out and out strikers. Tends to play with pace, pressuring high up the pitch.

4-2-3-1

MIDFIELDERS

Jordi ALBA
Age 22 (21.03.89)
Young left-sided midfielder who has come through the ranks. Has also been used at left-back.



David ALBELDA
Age 33 (01.09.77)
Veteran defensive midfielder who resolved a contractual dispute with the club but is now on the fringes.

Ever BANEGA (Arg)
Age 23 (29.06.88)
Defensive midfielder signed for £15m in 2008 but loaned out to Atletico Madrid.

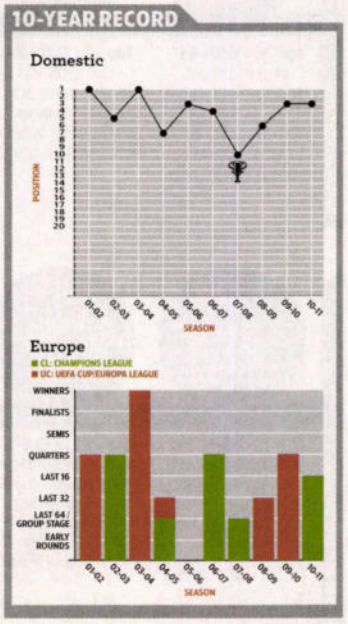
Pablo HERNANDEZ
Age 26 (11.04.85)
Winger who rejoined the club from Getafe in 2008 and has also broken into Spain's national side.

TINO Costa (Arg)
Age 26 (09.01.85)
Central midfielder who made his way through the lower divisions in France before moving to Spain in 2010.

Mehmet TOPAL (Tur)
Age 25 (03.03.86)
Tough-tackling central midfielder signed from Galatasaray in 2010.

Plus: Sofiane **FEGHOULI** (Fra; Age 21, 26.12.89)

10-YEAR RECORD



FORWARDS

JONAS (Bra)
Age 27 (01.01.84)
Joined from Gremio in January. Had a prolific scoring record in Brazil, earning him an international cap.

Juan MATA
Age 23 (28.04.88)
Attacking midfielder who was a member of Spain's World Cup-winning squad. Linked heavily with a move to Arsenal.

Dani PAREJO
Age 22 (16.04.89)
Signed from Getafe this summer.

Pablo PIATTI (Arg)
Age 22 (31.03.89)
Only 5ft4in tall, a secondary forward signed from Almeria this summer.

Roberto SOLDADO
Age 26 (27.05.85)
Centre-forward who has taken on the goalscoring duties following David Villa's departure last year.

Plus: Aritz **ADURIZ** (Age 30, 11.02.81)

SPAIN

Villarreal

THE COACH

Juan Carlos GARRIDO
Age 42 (29.03.69)
Formerly coach of Villarreal B, he stepped up to take charge of the first team when Ernesto Valverde was sacked in February 2010.

(All ages as of 01.08.11)

GOALKEEPERS

DIEGO LOPEZ
Age 29 (03.11.81)
First-choice keeper who joined from Real Madrid in 2007. On the fringes of the national squad.

Cesar SANCHEZ
Age 39 (02.09.71)
Experienced keeper signed from Valencia this summer as cover for Lopez. One cap for Spain. Spent a season at Tottenham on the bench.

Yellow Submarine are back but the vultures are circling

El Madrigal stadium... ...has a capacity of 25,000

A return to the Champions League was just reward for a club, nicknamed the *El Submarino Amarillo* (yellow submarine), that played some of the neatest football in Spain last season. Their semi-final slot in the Europa League was proof that while the Spanish league is a two-horse race it is not because the rest are a bunch of donkeys, with Santi Cazorla, Borja Valero and Giuseppe Rossi among the country's best performers.

There are hopes that they can progress in the Champions League this season although whether the squad can fight on a number of fronts is an issue. And they are suffering the inevitable consequences of an impressive season: the vultures are circling. Rossi was a target for a number of wealthier clubs.

DEFENDERS

ANGEL Lopez
Age 30 (10.03.81)
First choice right-back who can also operate as a midfielder. Missed most of 2011 with a serious knee injury.

Jose CATALA
Age 26 (01.01.85)
Reserve who may now get a run in the first team following Joan Capdevila's move to Benfica.

Mario GASPAR
Age 20 (24.11.90)
Under-21 defender who got his opportunity at right-back last season following Angel's injury.

GONZALO Rodriguez (Arg)
Age 27 (10.04.84)
Tough centre-back who has been the mainstay of the back-line for a number of seasons.

Mateo MUSACCHIO
Age 20 (26.08.90)
Young centre-back signed from River Plate at 18 and promoted to the first team last season.

Cristian ZAPATA (Col)
Age 24 (30.09.86)
Versatile defender signed from Udinese this summer. Had also been linked with Liverpool.

TACTICS

Coach Garrido has reinstated a technical, slow-slow-fast style of game, with short-passing interspersed with swift counter-attacks. It's a narrow 4-4-2 with the two "wide" men encouraged to come inside as creative playmakers with real mobility, making it almost a 4-2-2-2.

4-4-2

MIDFIELDERS

BORJA Valero
Age 26 (12.01.85)
Central midfielder who was a key figure last season on loan from West Brom. Made his debut for Spain this summer.

BRUNO Soriano
Age 27 (12.06.84)
Central midfielder who has come up through the ranks and has now broken into the Spain squad.

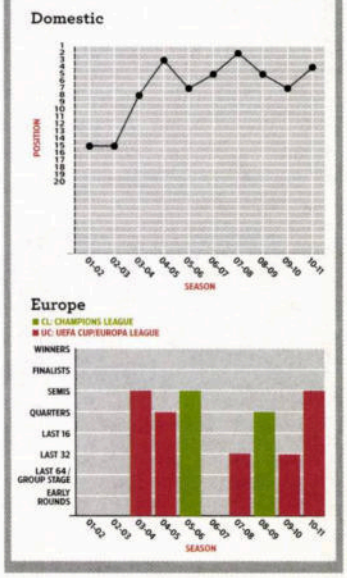
Javier CAMUNAS
Age 31 (17.07.80)
Winger who joined this summer from Osasuna, where he scored the only goal in a 1-0 home win over Real Madrid.

Carlos MARCHENA
Age 31 (31.07.79)
World Cup-winning central defender, who can also play as a defensive midfielder.

Marcos SENNA
Age 35 (17.07.76)
Brazil-born club captain who starred for Spain at Euro 2008. Powerful long-range shot but no longer first choice.

WAKUSO (Gha)
Age 20 (25.07.90)
Defensive midfielder who made his first-team debut last season.

10-YEAR RECORD



FORWARDS

CANI
Age 29 (03.08.81)
Wide midfielder who is usually deployed on the right but can also operate on the left if required.

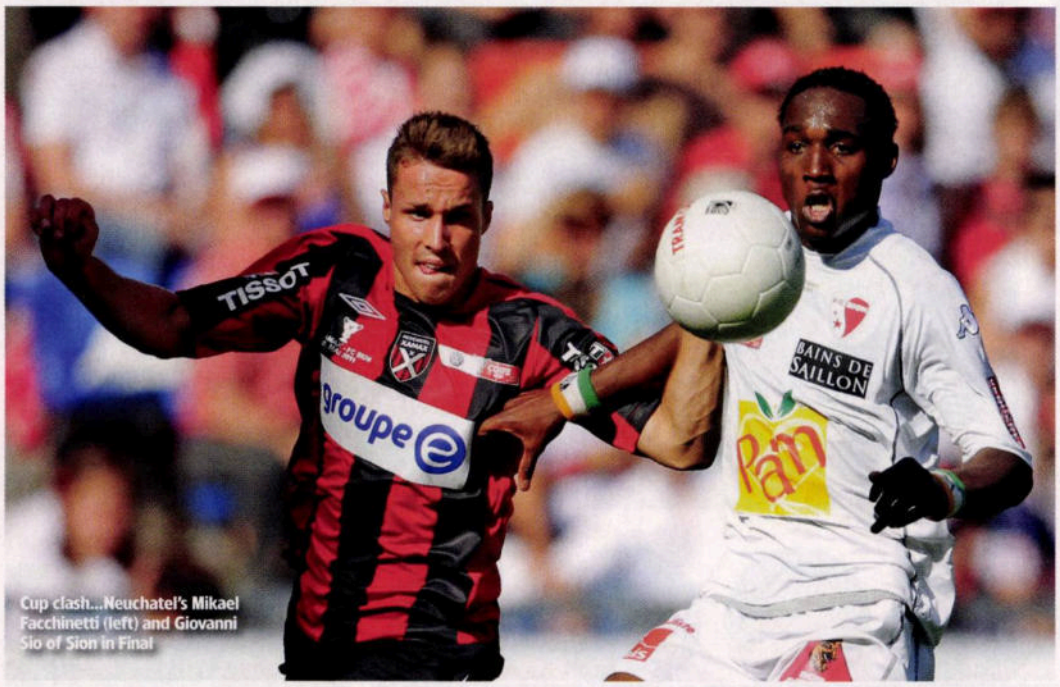
Santi CAZORLA
Age 26 (13.12.84)
Speedy wide attacker who missed the 2010 World Cup through injury. Has been linked with a move to big-spending Malaga.

NILMAR (Bra)
Age 27 (14.06.84)
Gifted attacker who is enjoying his second spell in Europe far more than his first, with Lyon in the mid-1980s.

Giuseppe ROSSI (Ita)
Age 24 (01.02.87)
US-born Italy international who has been linked with a move away from Villarreal all summer.

Marco RUBEN (Arg)
Age 24 (26.10.86)
Has failed to make an impression on the first team since joining from River Plate in 2008.

New owner has big plans for little Xamax



Cup clash...Neuchatel's Mikael Facchinetti (left) and Giovanni Sio of Sion in Final

Key dates

Season starts
July 16, 2011
Season ends
May 17, 2012

Basle and **Zurich** may have dominated the Swiss Super League for the last few years, but **Neuchatel Xamax**'s new Chechen owner Bulat Chagaev believes his side can break their stranglehold.

Chagaev has promised to build a team good enough to qualify for the Champions League, although whether he can do that without infringing UEFA's new Financial Fairplay rules remains to be seen, given that the club's catchment area is small and potential revenue very limited.

Neuchatel had a taste of Chagaev's methods at the end of last season, when he took over with the team battling with relegation. He contrived to fire two coaches in the space of a month as the club survived the drop by the skin of their teeth and lost the Swiss Cup Final. French coach Francois Ciccolini is now in the hot seat.

Until Chagaev came along, Christian Constantin at Swiss Cup winners **Sion** was indisputably the country's most eccentric club president. Anything can happen where Constantin is concerned – he even appointed himself team coach at one point. Sion made it 12 wins in 12 Swiss Cup Final appearances as they earned themselves another stab at the Europa League.

Sion certainly have Switzerland's most picturesque stadium, with mountains all around and grazing cows perched on the sides in archetypical Swiss fashion. The squad includes Ivorian midfielder Geoffrey Serey Die, who was astonishingly – and wrongly – accused two seasons ago by Constantin of deliberately getting sent off as part of a match-fixing ploy.

Switzerland may be famous as a banking centre but financial problems continue to ravage the country's domestic game. St Gallen, the country's oldest club, narrowly escaped bankruptcy last season when a group of local businessmen stepped in to rescue them at the last minute. However, they did not escape the drop and were relegated along with Bellinzona, whose departure has left the Italian-speaking part of the country without a representative in the top flight.

Grasshoppers, who have won a record 27 titles but none since 2003, have kept Ciriaco Sforza on as coach for another season and young striker Innocent Emeghara is rated one of the country's most promising players. The club are, however, plagued by cash-flow problems. They also remain without a stadium after their old one, the Hardturm, was demolished, and plans for a replacement Stadion Zurich ran into planning problems. In the meantime, they are sharing the Letzigrund, primarily an athletics stadium, with rivals Zurich and FIFA's home city embarrassingly remains without a dedicated football venue.

Homeless...Grasshoppers coach Sforza and striker Emeghara

Former Tottenham Hotspur and Stuttgart coach Christian Gross has replaced Vladimir Petkovic at **Young Boys** as they attempt to win their first title since 1986. The club from Berne have lost Ivorian playmaker Thierry Doubai, sold to Udinese, but managed to sign 19-year-old Nassim Ben Khalifa, bringing him home after an unhappy year in Germany with Wolfsburg.

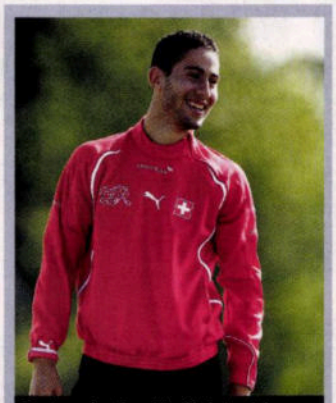
Thun have had a roller-coaster ride in the last few years, going from second division to the Champions League, squandering the money, going back down to the second tier and then back up again. Hoping to build on last season's performance, when they finished in a respectable fifth place and qualified for the Europa League, they have appointed old warhorse Bernard Challandes as their coach.

Murat Yakin, the older brother of veteran midfield playmaker and former Switzerland international Hakan Yakin, is the new coach at **Lucerne**. Usually a mid-table outfit, they will be hoping to qualify for the Europa League and improve on last season's form when they started brightly but suffered a shocking collapse late on.

The new season sees the return of two clubs **Servette** and **Sport Lausanne**. Seventeen-times champions Servette are back in the top flight for the first time since 2004-05 when they were kicked out after going bankrupt and had to start again in the third division. Portuguese coach Joao Alves led them out of the second division last season and is still in charge.

Sport Lausanne, who won the last of their seven league titles in 1964, were relegated in 2001-02 after failing to obtain a licence due to their finances and they too have been down to the third division. For their first season back in the top flight they will be without key midfielder Rodrigo Tosi, who has moved to Iran.

Brian Homewood


Start again...Ben Khalifa is back home

SIGNING OF THE SUMMER
NASSIM BEN KHALIFA
(Young Boys)
Now 19, the midfield prodigy who was voted the second-best player at the Under-17 World Cup in 2009 is back in Switzerland on loan after failing to make the grade in Germany.

SWITZERLAND

Basle

THE COACH

Thorsten FINK (Ger)
Age 43 (28.10.67)
Former Bayern Munich midfielder in his third year at the club, having won the double in his first season and the league last term.

(All ages as of 01.08.11)

Champions still a stepping stone to the big time

St Jakob Park...Basle's home holds 38,512

Switzerland's third-most successful club in terms of national titles, Basle have been considered the country's strongest and most well-organised outfit for the past decade.

Having suffered a long decline during the 1980s and 1990s, they bounced back in 2002 to win their first league title in 22 years. They have won five more since, including the last two, and played in the Champions League group stage three times, reaching the last 16 once.

The club's annual budget is estimated at around £38million and Basle are regarded as something of a stepping stone, having helped numerous foreign players to bridge the gap between the African and South American leagues and the big European leagues.

GOALKEEPERS

Marcel HERZOG
Age 31 (28.06.80)
Signed in June after four seasons with German second-tier side Duisburg.

Yann SOMMER
Age 22 (17.12.88)
Former Under-21 international who is expected to replace Franco Costanzo as first choice.

DEFENDERS

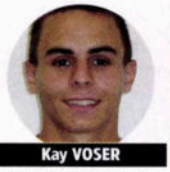
David ABRAHAM (Arg)
Age 24 (16.07.86)
Left-footer who has been the leader of the defence for the past few seasons.

Aleksandar DRAGOVIC (Aut)
Age 20 (06.03.91)
Central defender signed last season from Austria Vienna.

Radoslav KOVAC (CzR)
Age 31 (27.11.79)
Signed from West Ham United in the close season.

PARK Joo-ho (SKo)
Age 24 (16.01.87)
Left-back and another new signing. Previously played in Japan for Jubilo Iwata and Kashima Antlers.

Markus STEINHOFER (Ger)
Age 25 (07.03.86)
Right-back brought in January to replace Samuel Inkoom. Previously at Eintracht Frankfurt and Kaiserslautern.



Kay VOSER
Age 24 (04.01.87)
Right-back signed in the summer from Grasshoppers.

Plus: Genseric **KUSUNGA** (Age 23, 12.03.88)

TACTICS

Fink prefers a conventional 4-4-2, with Abraham commanding the back four and Huggel and Yapi pulling the strings in midfield, supplying the ammunition for Frei and Streller. Frei is still the key player, although he often tries to do too much, taking most of the corners and free-kicks.

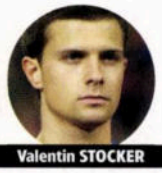
4-4-2

MIDFIELDERS

CABRAL
Age 22 (22.10.88)
Cape Verde-born defensive midfielder who broke through under Fink after loan with Sevilla's B team.

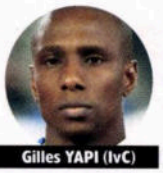
Fabian FREI
Age 22 (08.01.89)
Has been at the club since 2007 and was ever-present in the Switzerland team at the Euro Under-21s this summer.

Benjamin HUGGEL
Age 34 (07.07.77)
Defensive midfielder who was a national team regular for almost a decade and has spent most of his career at Basle.



Valentin STOCKER
Age 22 (12.04.89)
Left-sided attacking midfielder. Already made more than 100 appearances for the club.

Granit XHAKA
Age 18 (07.09.92)
One of Switzerland's young hopefuls, a European Under-21 Championship finalist this summer. Has already made his full international debut.



Gilles YAPI (IvC)
Age 29 (30.01.82)
Versatile midfielder who joined Basle last year after four seasons with Young Boys. Played for his country at the 2006 World Cup.

FORWARDS

Alexander FREI
Age 31 (15.07.79)
Switzerland's record scorer who retired from international football last season after criticism of his performances. Top scorer in the Swiss league last season.

PAK Kwang-ryong (NKo)
Age 18 (27.09.92)
A new signing and something of an unknown quantity.

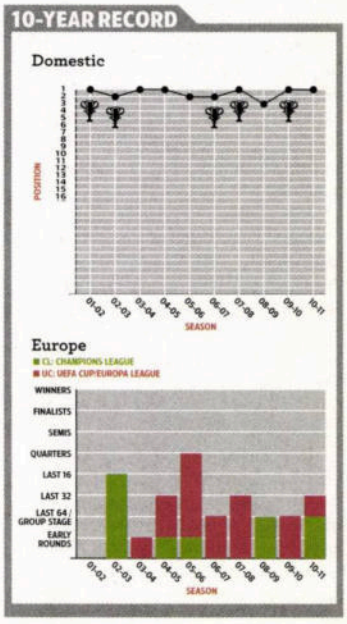
Xherdan SHAQUIRI
Age 19 (10.10.91)
Diminutive winger described by his coach as a "street footballer". Already a regular international and on the radar of Europe's top clubs.

Marco STRELLER
Age 30 (18.06.81)
Frei's regular striking partner also quit international football last season. Tall but deceptively gifted on the ground.

Fwayo TEMBO (Zim)
Age 22 (02.05.89)
Scored two league goals last season following his move from Etoile Sahel of Tunisia. Right-sided striker.

Jacques ZOUA (Cam)
Age 19 (06.09.91)
Back-up to Frei and Streller, he has scored 13 goals in two seasons since joining from Cotonsport.

10-YEAR RECORD



SWITZERLAND

Zurich

THE COACH

Urs FISCHER
Age 45 (20.02.66)
Has spent most of his career at the club, as a player and coach. Took over in 2010 and just missed out on the title.

(All ages as of 01.08.11)

Euro run needed to bring the fans back

Letzigrund...the 23,605-capacity ground is cuurently shared with city rivals Grashhoppers

Twice semi-finalists in the European Cup, Zurich are pinning their hopes on a decent run in this season's Champions League. Despite finishing runners-up to Basle in the domestic league last season, their home attendances averaged little over 11,000, contributing to a trading deficit of more than £6million.

Coach Urs Fischer is well aware that additions to his squad are dependent on getting into the Champions League group stage and failure to progress could result in the sale of key players such as midfielder Dusan Djuric and defenders Mathieu Beda and Jorge Teixeira.

Once again, Zurich will be heavily reliant on a mixture of long-serving home-grown talent and promising young North African imports.

GOALKEEPERS

Andrea GUATELLI (Ita)
Age 27 (05.05.84)
Joined in 2007 after spells in England, at Portsmouth and Oxford United. Finally became first choice last season.

Johnny LEONI
Age 27 (30.6.84)
Zurich's regular keeper since 2005 until losing out to Guatelli, and a fringe member of the national squad.

Plus: Yannick **BRECHER** (Age 17, 25.05.93)

DEFENDERS

Mathieu BEDA (Fra)
Age 30 (28.7.81)
Can line up in the centre of the defence or defensive midfield. Previously played for Bordeaux, Standard Liege, Kaiserslautern and Munich 1860.

Philippe KOCH
Age 20 (08.02.91)
Switzerland Under-21 right-back who made his Zurich debut three years ago.

Ludovic MAGNIN
Age 32 (20.04.79)
National team left-back who signed in 2010 after seven years in Germany, with Werder Bremen and Stuttgart.

Ricardo RODRIGUEZ
Age 18 (25.08.92)
Central defender or left-back who joined as an 11-year-old. A Switzerland youth international.

Florian STAHEL
Age 26 (10.03.85)
Right-back who has been at the club since 2004 and won two Swiss titles. Missed part of last season through injury.

Jorge TEIXEIRA (Por)
Age 24 (27.08.86)
Centre-back who played in the Cypriot second division, then for Maccabi Haifa before joining Zurich last year.

Plus: Heinz **BARMETTLER** (Age 24, 21.07.87), Raphael **KOCH** (Age 21, 20.01.90)

TACTICS

Fischer's conventional 4-4-2 relies on a number of long-serving players including Stahel, Margaraiz, Aegerter and striker Alphonse, who has been scoring on a consistent if unspectacular basis. Their big hope this season is Mehmedi, who was a Euro Under-21 Championship runner-up with Switzerland.

4-4-2

MIDFIELDERS

Silvan AEGERTER
Age 31 (05.05.80)
Captain who plays a pivotal role in central midfield. Appeared in the Champions League group stages for previous club Thun.

Dusan DJURIC (Swe)
Age 26 (16.09.84)
Attacking midfielder who has been impressive since joining from Halmstad.

Stjepan KUKURUZOVIC (Cro)
Age 22 (07.06.89)
Attacking midfielder who had a good season after joining from Thun. Although Switzerland-born, he is a Croatian national.

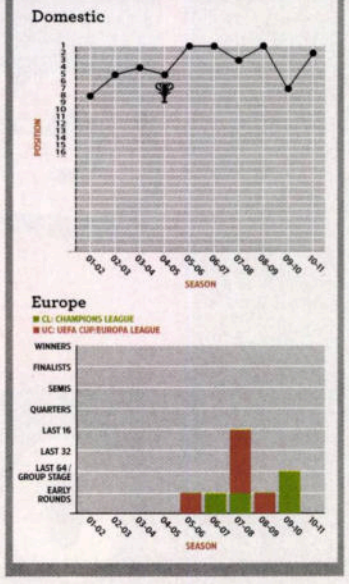
Xavier MARGARAIZ
Age 27 (07.01.84)
Regarded as the team's playmaker. Has been at the club since 2005 apart from an unsuccessful season with Osasuna.

Adrian NIKCI
Age 21 (10.11.89)
Kosovo-born right-sided midfielder or full-back who is a Switzerland Under-21 international.

Chaker ZOUAGHI (Tun)
Age 26 (10.01.85)
Defensive midfielder who arrived from Tunisian club Etoile Sahel last year. Spent three seasons at Lokomotiv Moscow.

Plus: Oliver **BUFF** (Age 18, 03.08.92), Yassine **CHIKHOAOUI** (Tun; Age 24, 22.09.86)

10-YEAR RECORD



FORWARDS

Alexandre ALPHONSE (Fra)
Age 29 (17.06.82)
Has spent most of his career in Switzerland, including five seasons at Zurich. Has played for the French overseas province of Guadeloupe.

Mohamed AMINE CHERMITI (Tun)
Age 23 (26.12.87)
Another member of the club's Tunisian contingent, he bagged nine goals in 16 games last season following his transfer from Hertha Berlin.

Josip DRMIC
Age 18 (08.08.92)
Up-and-coming striker with dual Swiss and Croatian nationality who made seven appearances last season.

Admir MEHMEDI
Age 20 (16.03.91)
Swizerland's top scorer at the 2011 Euro Under-21s with three goals and also the club's leading marksman last term.

Marco SCHOENBAECHLER
Age 21 (11.01.90)
Versatile midfielder with youth international experience for Switzerland.

The ultimate guide to the new season

On sale now

UKRAINE

Big money needed to take on top two

Danger of a fall...Metalist (in yellow) and Karpaty are at the centre of a match-fixing investigation

Key dates

Season starts
July 8, 2011
Season ends
May 12, 2012

Having beaten the title-holders 3-1 in the Ukrainian Super Cup, **Dynamo Kiev** will once again be regarded as the team with the best chance of stopping **Shakhtar Donetsk** from winning a third successive Premier League title. However, the big two are not the only sides with Champions League aspirations.

Billionaire industrialist Oleksandr Yaroslavsky, who bought **Metalist Kharkiv** in 2004 and has lavished more than £250million on the club, wants more than third place they have achieved for the past five seasons – for his investment. "This season I definitely will require more from my players and training staff," he says. "We are strong enough to challenge the two strongest clubs until the end."

Metalist have reinforced their Argentinian contingent with the signing of holding midfielder Juan Manuel Torres from San Lorenzo, but their hopes of progressing will probably rest with a hearing by the international Court of Arbitration for Sport in September, which is investigating match-fixing claims surrounding a league game against Karpaty nearly three years ago and could issue a nine-point deduction.

The other serious contenders to the top two's hegemony are **Dnipro Dnipropetrovsk**. Like Metalist they have a wealthy owner in Ihor Kolomoyskyi, who is hungry for glory. However, despite an annual budget of £45m – which is equal to that of Dynamo Kiev – Dnipro have finished fourth in five of the last seven seasons.

The departure of striker Yevhen Seleznyov to Shakhtar will not help matters, although Dnipro do have a balanced blend of quality, youth and experience with players such as Ghana defender Samuel Inkoom, Croatia's Ivan Strinic, Brazil playmaker Giuliano and Ukraine front man Yevhen Konoplianka. The major recruit of the summer was Ghana's Derek Boateng, signed from Getafe in Spain for £4.3m and who is just the sort of midfield battler they lacked last season. The squad has also been bolstered by the addition of Vorskla Poltava midfielder Denys Kulakov and striker Oleksiy Antonov (Illichivets).

"We are fully prepared and very well equipped to sandwich ourselves between Shakhtar and Kyiv Dynamo this term," claims Dnipro coach Juande Ramos.

In recognition of another fifth-place finish last season, and qualification again for the Europa League, **Karpaty Lviv** rewarded Belarusian coach Aleh Konanaw with a new three-year contract for his two fine seasons in charge. However, they too could find themselves in trouble if the international Court of Arbitration for Sport impose a points deduction for the allegedly fixed game with Metalist. A further concern is the loss of on-loan Romania forward Razvan Cocis, who has moved on to Russian club Rostov.

Another Belarusian coach, Leonid Koutchouk, has made **Arsenal Kiev** strong contenders for a Europa League place after releasing several veterans and signing quality replacements such as goalkeeper Yevhen Borovyk and attacking midfielder Oleksandr Maksymov, both from Kryvbas, as well as defender Volodymyr Polyovyi from Metalurh Zaporizhya, who were relegated at the end of last season.

Tavriya Simferopol's new coach Semen Altman has gone for experience, bringing in ex-Ukraine international defender Volodymyr Yezerskiy from Shakhtar Donetsk, midfielder Maksym Kalynychenko and winger Serhiy Nazarenko (both from Dnipro), and powerful Croatian midfielder Marin Ljubicic from Hajduk Split. **Metalurh Donetsk** will hope that Armenia internationals Gevorg Ghazaryan and Marcos Pizzelli, who have both arrived from Pyunik Yerevan, will bring entry to the Europa League.

A quiet pre-season transfer policy may cost this season's Europa League representatives **Vorskla Poltava**, who have a small squad and look depleted at the back following the departure of Kulakov to Dnipro.

Last season strugglers **Illichivets Mariupol** are full of confidence this term after the arrival of no less than 16 players on loan from Shakhtar, including Bohdan Shust, Oleksiy Polyanskiy, Ruslan Fomin and 2009 Euro Under-19 winner Bohdan Butko. Such deep co-operation between the two clubs became possible after Shakhtar owner Rinat Akhmetov bought iron and steel giants Azovstal, the long-time sponsors of Illichivets.

Volyn Lutsk confirmed the arrival of Macedonia defender Vance Sikov from Cypriot club Ethnikos Achnas, ex-Dynamo Kiev stopper Oleh Dopilka and Brazilian forward Maicon from Romania's Steaua Bucharest. The club traditionally suffer from poor financing but their productive transfer campaign may place them comfortably in the middle of the table.

Modest **Obolon**, who have been transformed during Serhiy Kovalets' two seasons in charge, are now a force to be reckoned with at times and they should have enough to beat the drop, but a testing season looks more than likely – as it does for **Zorya Luhansk**, **Kryvbas Kryvyi Rih** and newcomers **Chornomorets Odesa** and **Oleksandria**.

Oleg Zadernovsky

Treading a familiar path...Dentinho

SIGNING OF THE SUMMER
DENTINHO (Shakhtar Donetsk)
Former Brazil Under-20 striker who joined the ever-increasing band of his countrymen in Donetsk following his £7million move from Corinthians. Scored on his Ukrainian league debut in a 4-0 win against Obolon.

UKRAINE

Dynamo Kiev

THE COACH

Yuri SEMIN (Rus)
Age 64 (11.05.47)
Returned after being fired by Lokomotiv Moscow in November. Said leaving Kiev in the first place was his biggest mistake.

(All ages as of 01.08.11)

GOALKEEPERS

Maksym KOVAL
Age 18 (09.12.92)
Made his debut in a Champions League play-off game against Ajax at the age of 17.

Oleksandr SHOVKOVSKIY
Age 36 (02.01.75)
Probably the best penalty stopper in Europe, Dynamo's captain has played more than 500 games for the club.

Semin's recruiting drive runs into the barriers

Chilly prospect...it could be a another lean season at the Valery Lobanovsky stadium

Disillusioned by another empty-handed season, club president Ihor Surkis handed Yuri Semin a £25million war chest for much-needed summer reinforcements.

Unfortunately for Russian coach Semin, three strikers on his wish-list – Benfica's Oscar Cardozo, Andrea Caracciolo of Brescia and Freiburg's Papiss Cisse – turned him down. Another target, Tottenham Hotspur's Croatia midfielder Niko Kranjcar, was considered too expensive.

To date, Dynamo have signed only Ideye Brown from Sochaux and his Nigerian countryman, Monaco midfielder Lukman Haruna – not enough to prevent the fans worrying about holding on to the second Champions League spot, let alone a domestic title challenge.

DEFENDERS

DANILO SILVA (Bra)
Age 24 (24.11.86)
Right-back signed from Internacional in 2008. Can lose positional sense under pressure.

Pape DIAKHATE (Sen)
Age 27 (21.06.84)
Injury-prone full-back recruited from Nancy in 2007. Back at Dynamo after a season's loan at Lyon.

Yevhen KHACHERIDI
Age 24 (28.07.87)
Central defender, blessed with good timing in the tackle. A short temper makes him a target for provocation.

Taras MYKHALYK
Age 27 (28.10.83)
Ukraine international who is cool under pressure and can also be deployed as a holding midfielder.

Goran POPOV (Mac)
Age 26 (02.10.84)
Powerful, energetic left-back signed from Heerenveen in June last year.

Ayila YUSSUF (Ngr)
Age 26 (04.11.84)
Nigeria international equally adept in defence or midfield.

Plus: BETAO (Bra; Age 27, 11.11.83), Badr **EL KADDOURI** (Mor; Age 30, 31.01.81), **LEANDRO ALMEIDA** (Bra; Age 24, 14.03.87)

TACTICS

Semin replaced the 4-3-3 attacking variant of his predecessor and countryman Valery Gazzaev with a classical 4-4-2 line-up or the recently adopted 4-5-1. More emphasis is made on reliability in defence and hard work in midfield, where the coach has a wide variety of options.

4-5-1

MIDFIELDERS

Oleksandr ALIYEV
Age 26 (03.02.85)
Ukraine playmaker and free-kick specialist but let down by poor discipline both on and off the pitch.

Roman EREMENKO (Fin)
Age 24 (19.03.87)
Inventive Finland star who rejected moves to Rubin Kazan and Fenerbahce.

Denys HARMASH
Age 21 (19.04.90)
Battler with scope for development. Member of Ukraine's victorious 2009 Euro Under-19 side.

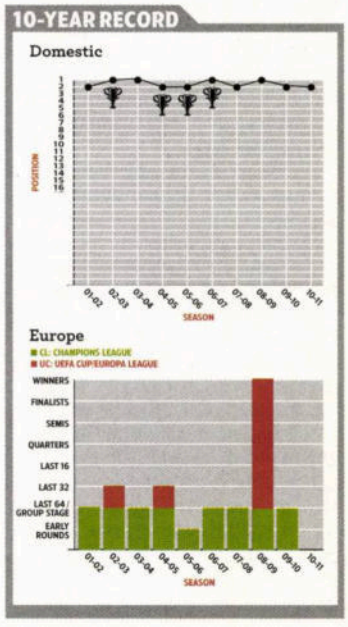
Lukman HARUNA (Ngr)
Age 20 (04.12.90)
Summer signing from Monaco, he was part of Nigeria's victorious squad at the 2007 Under-17 World Cup.

Oleh HUSYEV
Age 28 (25.04.83)
International right-winger with an ability to quickly turn defence into attack.

Ognjen VUKOJEVIC (Cro)
Age 27 (20.12.83)
Croatia international who is strong in the tackle. Helped Dynamo to the 2009 title in his first season.

Plus: CORREA (Bra; Age 30, 29.12.80), Milos **NINKOVIC** (Ser; Age 26, 25.12.84)

10-YEAR RECORD



FORWARDS

Fanendo ADI (Ngr)
Age 20 (10.10.90)
On loan from Metalurh Donetsk. Had trials at Ajax and was quite prolific with Slovakia's Trencin.

IDEYE Brown (Ngr)
Age 22 (10.10.88)
Nigeria international signed for £7m this summer after scoring 15 goals in his first season for French side Sochaux.

Artem KRAVETS
Age 22 (03.06.89)
Has lots of potential but yet to rediscover his goalscoring touch after a serious injury in 2009.

Artem MILEVSKIY
Age 26 (12.01.85)
Lacks pace, but combines power and skill with a natural goalscoring touch.

Andriy SHEVCHENKO
Age 34 (29.09.76)
Master goalscorer now limited to rare moments of magic because of chronic back pain. Third all-time Champions League top scorer with 67 goals.

Andriy YARMOLENKO
Age 21 (23.10.89)
The most talented forward of the new generation, with power, thought and touch to trouble rival defences.

UKRAINE

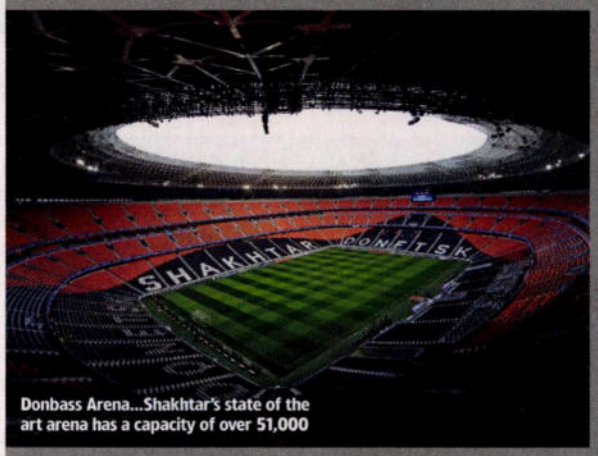
Shakhtar Donetsk

THE COACH

Mircea LUCESCU (Rom)
Age 65 (29.07.45)
Wily boss has re-stocked the club's trophy room with 13 pieces of silverware, including the UEFA Cup in 2009, in eight years.

(All ages as of 01.08.11)

Lucescu puts his faith in more boys from Brazil



Donbass Arena...Shakhtar's state of the art arena has a capacity of over 51,000

Shakhtar coach Mircea Lucescu continues to believe that Brazilian is best and has added two more to his squad this summer. Bruno Ferreira Bonfim – who goes by the name of Dentinho – arriving from Corinthians as an alternative to Luiz Adriano, whose lack of goals, especially in the Champions League, has been a big concern for Lucescu.

The other newcomer, Alan Patrick, was signed from Santos and is seen by some as a potential replacement for countrymen Willian or Douglas Costa if they were to move on to one of the bigger leagues

As the strongest side in Ukraine in every aspect of the game, a third successive domestic title for Shakhtar looks a fair bet.

GOALKEEPERS

Andriy PYATOV
Age 27 (28.06.84)
Confident and excels in one-on-one confrontations. Was a member of the Ukraine squad which reached 2006 World Cup quarter-finals.

Oleksandr RYBKA
Age 24 (10.04.87)
Good shot stopper, summer signing from Dynamo Kiev, with whom he suffered a serious head injury on his Champions League debut against Real Madrid in 2006.

DEFENDERS

Dmytro CHYGRYNSKIY
Age 24 (07.11.86)
Vice-captain known for his long raking passes. Has suffered several injuries since returning from Barcelona in 2010.

Mykola ISCHENKO
Age 28 (09.03.83)
Industrious, battling centre-back but with poor positional sense. Involved in a match-fixing scandal at ex-club Karpaty Lviv.

Yaroslav RAKITSKIY
Age 21 (03.08.89)
Uncompromising, centre-back, named in the team of the tournament at the this summer's Euro Under-21s.

Razvan RAT (Rom)
Age 30 (26.05.81)
Left-back recruited from Rapid Bucharest in 2003. Competent crosser who also possesses a thunderous shot.

Vyacheslav SHEVCHUK
Age 32 (13.05.79)
Steady, unobtrusive left-sided defender. First choice for Ukraine more than his club.

Darijo SRNA (Cro)
Age 29 (01.05.82)
Club captain who joined from Hajduk Split in 2003. Very energetic and a constant threat on the right wing.

Plus: Oleksandr **CHYZHOV** (Age 24, 10.08.86), Vasyl **KOBIN** (Age 26, 24.05.85), Sergiy **KRYVTSOV** (Age 20, 15.03.91)

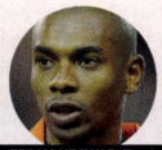
TACTICS

Lucescu's favoured 4-2-3-1 formation always relies heavily on the physical strength of his Ukrainian central defenders Rakitskiy and Chygrynskiy. This solid base then allows Brazilians such as Willian, Jadson, Douglas Costa and Luiz Adriano to do their thing.

4-2-3-1

MIDFIELDERS

DOUGLAS COSTA (Bra)
Age 20 (14.09.90)
Promising, talented right-winger never happier than when driving at the opposition defence.



FERNANDINHO (Bra)
Age 26 (04.05.85)
Midfield battler with a powerful shot from long distance.

Tomas HUBSCHMAN (CzR)
Age 29 (04.09.81)
Holding midfielder with good physical presence and tactical awareness.

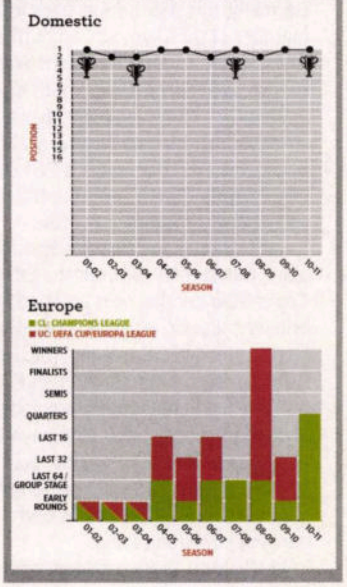
JADSON (Bra)
Age 27 (05.10.83)
Unselfish ball player who creates and also scores – as he did in the 2009 UEFA Cup Final against Werder Bremen.

Henrikh MKHITARYAN (Arm)
Age 22 (21.01.89)
Armenia national team star, signed from city rivals Metalurh.

WILLIAN (Bra)
Age 22 (09.08.88)
Adept with the ball at his feet, signed for a club record £17m from Corinthians in August 2007.

Plus: ALEX TEIXEIRA (Bra; Age 21, 06.01.90), Oleksiy **HAI** (Age 28, 06.11.82), Taras **STEPANENKO** (Age 21, 08.08.89)

10-YEAR RECORD



FORWARDS

Julius AGHAHOWA (Ngr)
Age 29 (12.02.82)
In his second spell with the club, spent last season on loan at Sevastopol, who were relegated from the Ukrainian top flight.

DENTINHO (Bra)
Age 22 (19.01.89)
Summer £7m acquisition from Corinthians, signed with clear intention of competing with Luiz Adriano for the lone striker's role.

EDUARDO (Cro)
Age 28 (25.02.83)
Croatia forward of Brazilian origin signed in 2010 from Arsenal, with whom he suffered a horrific broken leg.

LUIZ ADRIANO (Bra)
Age 24 (12.04.87)
Target man signed from Internacional after winning the 2006 Club World Cup.

Marcelo MORENO (Bol)
Age 24 (18.06.87)
Powerful striker who was loaned to Werder Bremen and Wigan Athletic after moving to Shakhtar from Brazilians Cruzeiro for £8million in 2008.

Yevhen SELEZNYOV
Age 25 (20.07.85)
Returned to Shakhtar this summer from Dnipro having been last season's leading league scorer with 17 goals.

Plus: Alan **PATRICK** (Bra; Age 20, 13.02.91), Vitaliy **VITSENETS** (Age 20, 03.08.90)

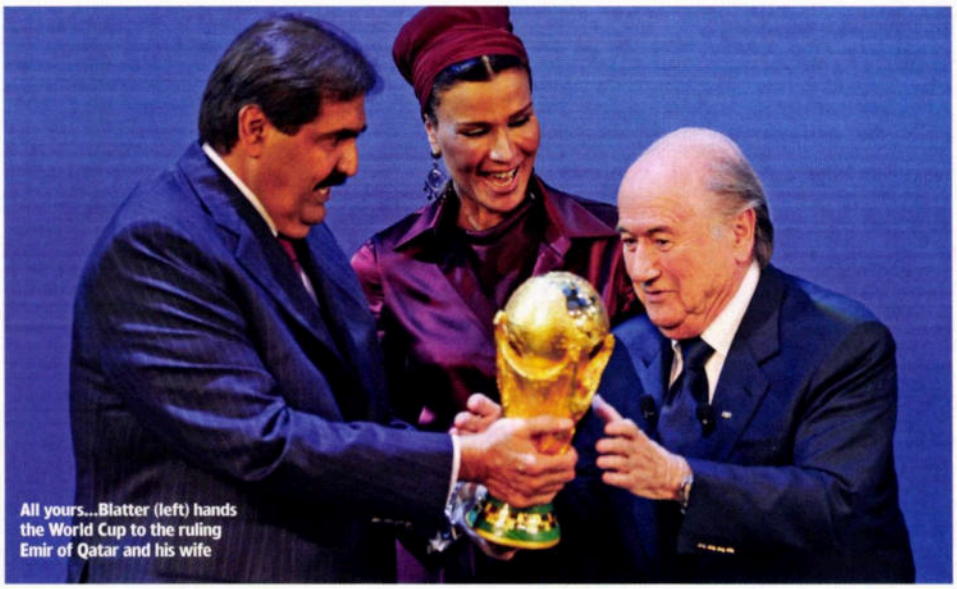
Keir Radnedge

THE INSIDER

The expert view on events off the pitch

Blatter's year of living dangerously

Twelve months on from the World Cup, FIFA's troubles have intensified



All yours...Blatter (left) hands the World Cup to the ruling Emir of Qatar and his wife

This time last year Sepp Blatter was still beaming in the afterglow of a happy month in South Africa, hailed for having brought the World Cup to the Republic and to the continent for the first time.

What a difference a year makes. If a week is a long time in politics, it is an eternity in football politics – and Blatter may have reflected thus philosophically when he returned to Durban recently.

Last year he was there for the World Cup semi-final between Spain and Germany, this year he was back as a member of the Olympic Committee that decided to send the 2018 Winter Games to PyeongChang, South Korea. In between, FIFA's credibility has been shattered by the vote-rigging scandals which engulfed December's 2018 and 2022 World Cup decisions and the subsequent presidency contest.

Jack Warner has since walked the plank rather than confront the Ethics Committee hearing over accusations of bribery collusion with Mohamed Bin Hammam and, in the meantime, two further power-brokers with feet in both FIFA and IOC camps are under investigation over other illicit payment allegations, with Issa Hayatou, president of CAF, and Joao Havelange, former long-serving FIFA president, both denying any wrongdoing.

In all of this there has been only one glimmer of good news for Blatter and his boys, and that was when the so-called "Qatar Whistle-blower" apologised for fabricating stories about the Gulf state's 2022 World Cup bid success.

Indeed, the retaliatory behaviour of sacked media specialist Phaedra Almajid is one of the most devastating sports media hoaxes in years.

It's been a bad time for large swathes of the media which swallowed Almajid's lies about the Qatar bid having offered bribes to FIFA executive committee members Hayatou, Jacques Anouma and Amos Adamu. She also planted a fabricated story claiming that Qatar had been considering financial support for the Argentinian federation led by Julio Grondona, FIFA's senior vice-president.

Of course Hayatou, Anouma and Grondona were members of the FIFA ExCo which, last December, awarded the 2018 World Cup to Russia and the 2022 finals to Qatar. Adamu, also a member of the ExCo, had been suspended weeks earlier on vote-rigging charges sparked by a separate investigation by *The Sunday Times*.

Qatar's victory shocked many outsiders mainly because of the country's small size, its lack of World Cup football pedigree and searing summer temperatures. Almajid's "inventions" fed a constituency of critics all too eager to believe the worst. They even included FIFA's secretary-general Jerome Valcke. In an email exchange with Warner, the Frenchman had referred to Qatar having "bought" the World Cup.

The allegations even went as far as the British Parliament. *The Sunday Times* – owned, like the *Wall Street Journal*, by Rupert Murdoch – included them in a written submission to the Select Committee on Football Governance.

Almajid revealed to me that she had decided to make her retraction "because it is the right thing to do" and insisted she had not come under any outside pressure nor had she been offered any financial inducement.

She sent a statement of apology, accompanied by a sworn affidavit of the facts to FIFA, to the Asian confederation, to the African confederation, to the Qatar FA, to the Qatar World Cup 2022 Bid Committee and to the national associations of Cameroon, Ivory Coast and Nigeria.

Almajid told me: "I did something very wrong and I have to do everything I can to put the record straight. I have to clear my conscience and cannot live with these lies anymore and I am very sorry to everyone I hurt, especially all my colleagues at the Qatar bid."

> "I did something very wrong and I have to put the record straight"
> **Qatar whistle-blower, Phaedra Almajid**

Qatar's success in landing 2022 was a landmark achievement, but the wealth of disinformation – never mind Almajid – has been flowing ever since, prompting rebuttal after rebuttal.

First came verbal scuffles over whether the finals should be switched to a cooler, winter date; then whether Qatar should share the finals with its Gulf neighbours; then a suggestion that matches might be split into 30-minute thirds to cope with the temperatures.

The tone of bid CEO Hassan Al Thawadi in a TV interview suggested, for the first time, that the Qataris' patience was beginning to wear thin.

How does he think Blatter feels?

Wenger's new bogeymen

Arsene Wenger has a new target. Not in terms of titles; in terms of bogeymen.

He used to term the expenditure of Roman Abramovich's Chelsea as "financial doping", now he has turned the focus of his disdain on Manchester City, who overtook Arsenal to finish third in the Premier League last season.

Wenger was provoked into verbal action by City's mammoth new sponsorship and stadium-name deal with Etihad Airways, the Abu Dhabi airline, which has been estimated as being worth between £150million and £300m over the next 10 years.

He suggested the deal was over-valued in an attempt to help owner Sheikh Mansour re-balance the accounts to fit Financial Fairplay.

Deal...Etihad Airways chairman James Hogan (left) and Manchester City's CEO, Garry Cook

UEFA has the right to judge whether such commercial deals reflect market value or have been inflated artificially.

Wenger is looking forward to such a controlling assessment though his confidence in the "determination" of fellow Frenchman Michel Platini to level the playing field may be over optimistic. In that case, Wenger fears, Financial Fair Play will be dead before it even draws its first breath.

He says: "If Financial Fairplay is to have a chance then sponsorships have to be at the market price. They cannot be doubled, tripled or quadrupled. If UEFA brings in such rules they have to be respected.

"Michel Platini knows some clubs will try to get around it...that is his big test."

City were furious, insisting the club was "a pro-active member" of the European Clubs Association and was "working actively and with transparency" on FFP.

Surely Wenger is too thick-skinned to have been irritated by Gael Clichy, the Arsenal left-back who says he swapped the capital city for Manchester City because "I want to play for a club who can win titles".

What ever can he have meant?

Failed...North Korea at the Women's World Cup this summer

Trouble starts at the top

In the past month:

- Five North Koreans fail dope tests at the Women's World Cup.
- Nine Mexicans fail dope tests before and during the Copa America.
- One Singapore national is jailed for two years and nine players are handed suspended terms for match-fixing in Finland.
- South Korea's match-fixing arrests count reaches 55 since June.
- German forward Rene Schnitzler is banned for 30 months in Germany, for second division match fixing.
- Turkey sees more than 30 players, coaches and club officials held on corruption charges.

If this were a tale of the British media, then MPs and the public would be demanding that the man at the top take the rap for events on his watch...

West Ham's Olympic dilemma

West Ham United are due to take over London's Olympic Stadium in the summer of 2013. But how long will the athletics track remain in place if, by then, the Hammers are not back in the Premier League?

The question arises because, while there has been a significant increase in parachute payments, the club could find itself financially challenged if it fails to bounce straight back up out of the second-tier Championship.

Crowd levels in the lower division will not match Premier potential, which will affect revenue and attendances, which is also certain to spark critical comment about the atmosphere.

Already it seems the prospects of London winning the right to host the 2017 World Athletics Championships is under threat from a rival bid by Qatar. Lose that and the main raison d'etre for keeping the running track will be wiped away; after all, the London Olympics will be history.

Anyway, how much do the 2012 organisers care about football? The Chinese staged the 2008 men's football Final in the main Bird's Nest Stadium in Beijing; London's Olympic stadium will not stage any games until West Ham take over.

Just another twist in a tangle exacerbated by the British Olympic Association angering Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland with a unilateral declaration of a "historic agreement" for a united British team – one reason, no doubt, why initial ticket sales for matches at Hampden Park, in particular, were poor. But then, as regular readers know, I believe LOCOG's decision to take matches to Scotland and Wales was naively misjudged in the first place.

PRO-DIRECT
soccer : the professional's choice

The World's Largest

BLUR

PRO LEVEL

Under Armour **Blur Pro**
Firm Ground - 27732
£99.99

"designed to out-run and out-manoeuvre your opponents"

The Blur Pro uses an entirely seamless micro-fibre upper, with the exception of where the tongue attaches, for an upper designed to form to the shape of the foot, whilst the smooth finish is aimed at providing better ball control.

PRO LEVEL

Under Armour **Blur Pro**
Firm Ground - 27731
£99.99

CLUB LEVEL

Under Armour **Blur**
Firm Ground - 27735
£79.99

INTRO LEVEL

Under Armour **Blur Challenge**
Firm Ground - 27737
£44.99

HYDRASTRIKE

A two-part upper which consist of K-Leather towards the toe for great fit and feel, and a perforated microfibre midsole. The forefoot features a unique quilted style of stitching that allows the boot to flex and bend exactly where the toes need it.
This area in particular is sensational, as up until now Under Armour have utilised synthetic materials in the toe area of their boots, but the Hydrastrike Pro is genuinely more soft and comfortable.

PRO LEVEL

Under Armour **Hydrastrike**
Firm Ground - 29788
£109.99

"enhanced comfort and less weight for improved performance"

The Professional's Choice Direct to Your Door

Online Football Store

PRO-DIRECT
soccer : the professional's choice

all light.
all fast.

PRO LEVEL
adiZero **F50 TRX**
Firm Ground - 34179
£144.99

light
makes
fast.

PRO LEVEL
adiZero **F50 TRX Leather**
Firm Ground - 34178
£144.99

LEATHER

PRO PERSONALISATION
BOOT iD
PRO-DIRECT MAKE IT YOURS

PRO PERSONALISATION
iconic, original and the best

ELITE LEVEL
adiZero **F50 Prime**
Firm Ground - 34178
£209.99

PRO LEVEL
adidas F50 adiZero
Firm Ground - 34174
£144.99

PRO LEVEL
adidas F50 adiZero
Soft Ground - 34176
£144.99

www.prodirectsoccer.com

PRO-DIRECT
soccer : the professional's choice

The World's Largest

THE NIKE MERCURIAL VAPOR SUPERFLY III

SPEED

THE ADVANTAGE OF SUPERIOR SPEED.

PRICES START FROM £49.99

PRO-DIRECT ELITE LEVEL

PRO PERSONALISATION BOOT iD
PRO-DIRECT MAKE IT YOURS

CR 7 WR 10 Iniesta Pique 3

THE NIKE CTR360 MAESTRI II ELITE

CONTROL

THE ADVANTAGE OF ULTIMATE CONTROL.

PRICES START FROM £44.99

PRO-DIRECT ELITE LEVEL

The Professional's Choice Direct to Your Door

Online Football Store

PRO-DIRECT
soccer : the professional's choice

THE NIKE T90 LASER III ELITE

ACCURACY

THE ADVANTAGE OF INCREDIBLE ACCURACY.

PRICES START FROM £44.99

PRO-DIRECT ELITE LEVEL

See The Complete Range Of Nike Football Boots Online // www.prodirectsoccer.com

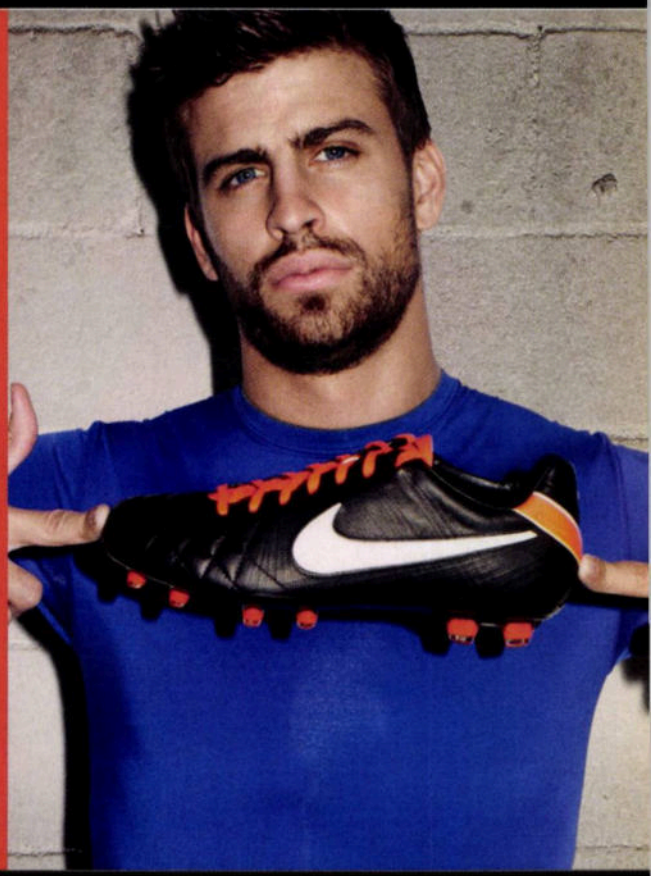
THE NIKE TIEMPO LEGEND IV ELITE

TOUCH

THE ADVANTAGE OF EXCEPTIONAL TOUCH.

PRICES START FROM £39.99

PRO-DIRECT ELITE LEVEL



www.prodirectsoccer.com

FOOTBALL KITS

T-SHIRTS AVAILABLE FROM
SOCCERPRINT.CO.UK

subside sports

NEW 2011-2012 SEASON PRODUCTS NOW AVAILABLE

INCLUDING THE NEW 11/12 AFGHANISTAN HOME L/S SHIRT £49.99

11-12 B.DORTMUND AWAY SHIRT £64.99

11-12 ST PAULI HOME SHIRT £49.99

11-12 GOTHENBURG HOME SHIRT £64.99

11-12 REAL CARTAGENA HOME SHIRT £64.99

TEL: 0845 8382442
EMAIL: SALES@SUBSIDE.CO.UK
WWW.SUBSIDE.CO.UK

VIDEO/CINE FILMS

www.RareSoccerVideos.com
Thousands of old games from the past

Watch the outstanding players and the best teams

Pele Maradonna Beckenbauer Cruyff and others

Relive the memories of those great games

vhs-pal, vhs-ntsc, dvd, world wide shipping
www.RareSoccerVideos.com

Soccer Matches on DVD 1954-2010

World Cups, Euro Champs, Euro Cups, Copa America, Maradona, Pele, Cruyff, Brazil, Milan, Juventus, Barcelona, Southern America, Europe, Asia.

Email for 2,000 Games List

sammi271@btinternet.com

PROGRAMMES

FREE PROGRAMME CATALOGUE

To receive a FREE copy of our latest catalogue (listing several thousand different mint condition Big Match and League teams programmes etc.) please send your name and address to:
STEVE EARL FOOTBALL PROGRAMMES (WS)
BROAD ST., BUNGAY, SUFFOLK NR35 1AH
or phone 01986 892621 or visit www.footballprogs.co.uk

PayPal & Debit/Credit cards accepted

FASHION

EXPRESS YOURSELF!

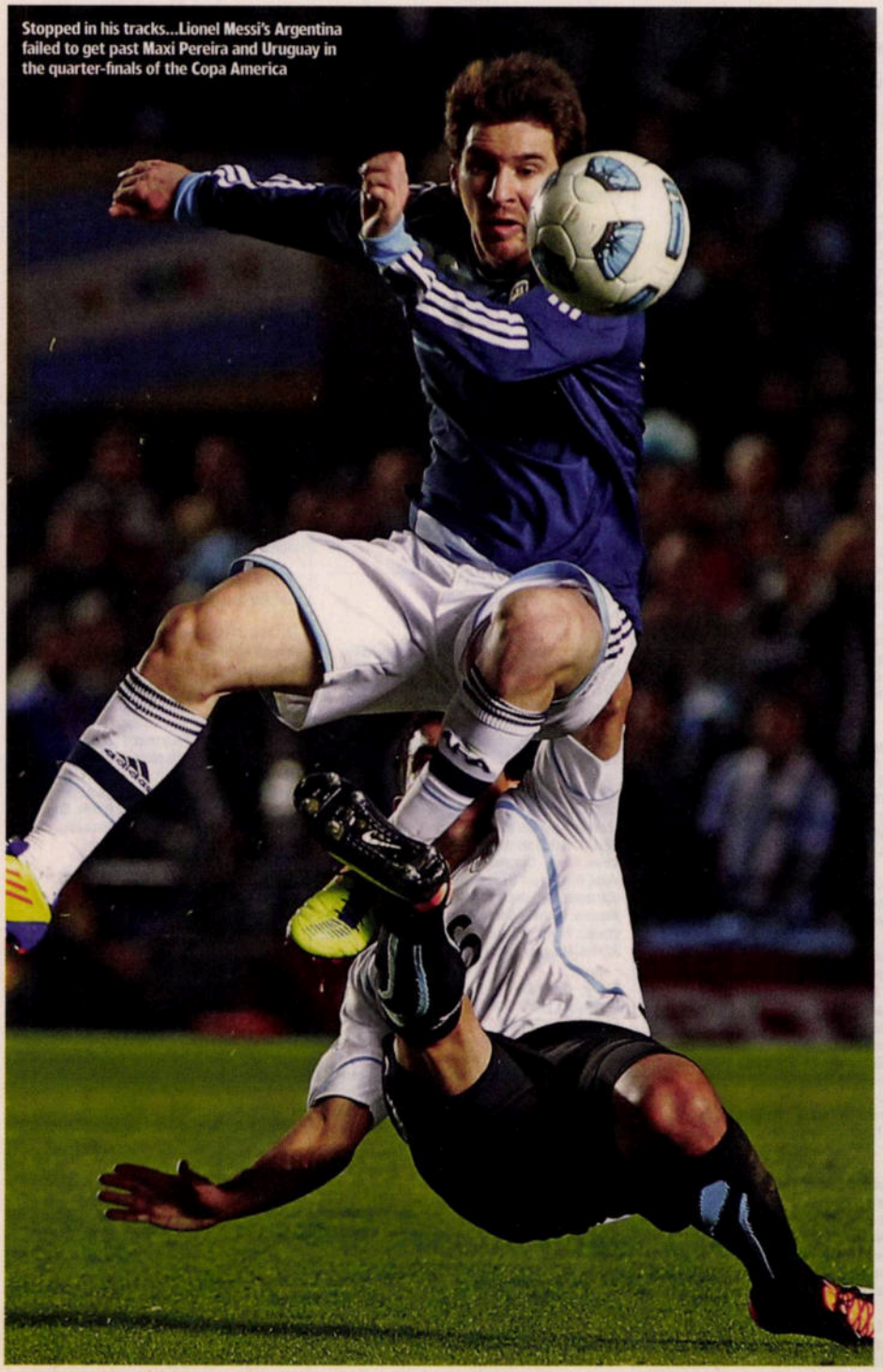
CUSTOM-MADE SHIRTS WHERE YOU PICK THE WORDING!

WE SHIP WORLDWIDE

www.cultzeros.co.uk

World Service

The ultimate Global news & results section



Stopped in his tracks...Lionel Messi's Argentina failed to get past Maxi Pereira and Uruguay in the quarter-finals of the Copa America

Contents

INTERNATIONAL RESULTS

116 Copa America
117 World Cup qualifiers
118 Jordan Tournament
118 Friendlies
119 Friendly fixtures
119 Under-17 World Cup
119 Women's World Cup

DIGEST

120 Under-17 World Cup
122 Women's World Cup

CLUB RESULTS

123 UEFA Champions League
123 Europa League
123 Baltic League
123 Setanta Cup
123 European leagues
125 Recopa
125 Sudamericana Cup
125 South American leagues
125 Central & North America
126 Africa
127 Asia
127 Oceania
127 Forthcoming fixtures

SQUADS

128 Copa America

Saviour...USA keeper Hope Solo (right) denies Brazil in the Women's World Cup

BAHAMAS

St Fleur opening flurry

Lesly St Fleur scored five times as Bahamas beat the Turks & Caicos Islands 6-0 on their way to a 10-0 aggregate victory in the opening round of the World Cup qualifiers.

CAMEROON

All-African Games

Winners of the past three All-Africa Games football tournaments – and four of the last five – Cameroon have been drawn in Group B of this year's tournament, which is to be held in the Mozambican capital of Maputo from September 3 to 18.

Cameroon have been drawn alongside Ghana, Senegal and Uganda, while the hosts Mozambique are in a group containing Libya, Madagascar and South Africa.

ENGLAND

Rivals play three times

India and Pakistan are to stage a three-match series, starting on August 25, in Manchester, Coventry and London. They previously played a three-match series in Pakistan in 2005.

Trio...India (left) and Pakistan

8 players from Mexico's Copa America squad handed six-month bans for inviting prostitutes back to the team hotel after a friendly

Internationals

COPA AMERICA

In Argentina

Group A

July 1 - La Plata
Argentina 1 (Aguero 75)
Bolivia 1 (Rojas 47)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Silvera (Uru)
Argentina: Romero - Zanetti, Burdisso, G Milito, Rojo, Banega, Mascherano, Cambiasso (Di Maria 46), Lavezzi (Aguero 70), Messi, Tevez.
Bolivia: Arias - Raldes, Rivero, Alvarez, Gutierrez, Robles, Flores, Campos (Arce 80), J Vaca (Chavez 63), Rojas (Cardozo 89), Martins.

July 2 - Jujuy
Colombia 1 (A Ramos 44)
Costa Rica 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Osses (Chl)
Colombia: L Martinez - Zuniga, Yepes, Perea, Armero, Bolivar, Guarin, Aguilar (Rodallega 33), Moreno (Gutierrez 69), A Ramos, Falcao (Soto 77).
Costa Rica: Moreira - Duarte, Acosta, Calvo, Salvatierra, Leal, Guzman (Cubero 74), Madrigal (Martinez 71), Mora, Brenes, Campbell (Elizondo 46). *Sent off: Brenes 27min.*

July 6 - Santa Fe
Argentina 0
Colombia 0
Ref: Fagundes (Bra)
Argentina: Romero - Zabaleta, Burdisso, G Milito, Zanetti, Banega (Higuain 71), Mascherano, Cambiasso (Gago 64), Lavezzi (Aguero 64), Messi, Tevez.
Colombia: L Martinez - Zuniga, Perea, Yepes, Armero, Sanchez, Aguilar, Guarin, A Ramos (Soto 89), Moreno (Mosquera 90+1), Falcao (Gutierrez 87).

July 7 - Jujuy
Bolivia 0
Costa Rica 2 (Martinez 59, Campbell 78)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Vera (Ecu)
Bolivia: Arias - Alvarez, Raldes, Rivero, Gutierrez, Rojas (Pena 67), Robles (Chavez 67), Flores, Campos (Garcia 79), Arce, Martins.
Sent off: Rivero 70min, Flores 75min.
Costa Rica: Moreira - Acosta, Duarte, Calvo, Salvatierra, Leal, Guzman, Mora (Cubero 82), Madrigal (Guevara 46), Campbell, Martinez (Elizondo 81).

July 10 - Santa Fe
Colombia 2 (Falcao 14, pen 28)
Bolivia 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Chacon (Mex)
Colombia: L Martinez - Zuniga, Perea, Yepes, Armero, Sanchez, Aguilar, Guarin (Cuadrado 50), Moreno (Rodallega 46), A Ramos (Soto 77), Falcao.
Bolivia: Arias - Vargas, Raldes, Amador, Alvarez, Robles, Garcia, Campos, Rojas (J Vaca 46), Arce (Pedriel 70), Martins (Pena 60).

July 11 - Cordoba
Argentina 3 (Aguero 46, 52, Di Maria 63)
Costa Rica 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Rivera (Per)
Argentina: Romero - Zabaleta, Burdisso, G Milito, Zanetti, Gago, Mascherano, Di Maria (Biglia 79), Messi, Aguero (Lavezzi 84), Higuain (Pastore 79).
Costa Rica: Moreira - Acosta, Salvatierra, Calvo (Brenes 46), Duarte, Leal, Mora, Cubero, Elizondo (Valle 56), Martinez (Madrigal 46), Campbell.

COPA AMERICA – GROUP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Colombia	3	2	1	0	3	0	7
Argentina	3	1	2	0	4	1	5
Costa Rica	3	1	0	2	2	4	3
Bolivia	3	0	1	2	1	5	1

Group B

July 3 - La Plata
Brazil 0
Venezuela 0
Ref: Orosco (Bol)
Brazil: Julio Cesar - Daniel Alves, Lucio, Thiago Silva, Andre Santos, Lucas Leiva, Ramires (Elano 75), Ganso, Robinho (Fred 64), Alexandre Pato (Lucas Silva 75), Neymar.
Venezuela: Vega - Rosales, Vizcarrondo, Perozo, Cichero, C Gonzalez (Di Giorgi 85), Lucena, Rincon, Arango, Rondon (Moreno 63), Fedor (Maldonado 78).

July 3 - Santa Fe
Paraguay 0
Ecuador 0
Ref: Pezzotta (Arg)
Paraguay: Villar - Piris, Da Silva, Veron, Torres, E Barreto (Vera 37), Ortigoza, Riveros, Estigarribia, Santa Cruz (Zeballos 83), Barrios (Haedo Valdez 73).
Ecuador: Elizaga - Reasco, Araujo, Erazo, Ayovi, Valencia (Arroyo 46), Mendez (Quiroz 81), Castillo, Noboa, Benitez, F Caicedo.

July 9 - Cordoba
Brazil 2 (Jadson 38, Fred 89)
Paraguay 2 (Santa Cruz 54, Haedo Valdez 66)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Roldan (Col)
Brazil: Julio Cesar - Daniel Alves, Lucio, Thiago Silva, Andre Santos, Lucas Leiva, Ramires (Lucas Silva 70), Ganso, Jadson (Elano 46), Alexandre Pato, Neymar (Fred 81).
Paraguay: Villar - Veron, Da Silva, Alcaraz, Torres, Vera, Riveros (Caceres 67), Ortigoza, Estigarribia (Martinez 78), Barrios (Haedo Valdez 56), Santa Cruz.

July 9 - Salta
Venezuela 1 (C Gonzalez 61)
Ecuador 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Quesada (CR)
Venezuela: Vega - Rosales, Perozo, Vizcarrondo, Cichero, Rincon, Lucena, C Gonzalez (Meza 63), Arango, Fedor (Rondon 73), Maldonado (Di Giorgi 80).
Ecuador: Elizaga - Reasco, Araujo, Erazo, Ayovi, Castillo (Quiroz 75), Noboa, Arroyo (Montano 71), Mendez, Benitez, F Caicedo.

July 13 - Salta
Paraguay 3 (Alcaraz 33, Barrios 62, Riveros 84)
Venezuela 3 (Rondon 5, Fedor 89, Perozo 90+2)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Osses (Chl)
Paraguay: Villar - Veron, Da Silva, Alcaraz, Torres, Vera (Santana 70), Riveros, Ortigoza, Estigarribia (Caceres 84), Barrios, Santa Cruz (Haedo Valdez 41).
Venezuela: Vega - Rosales, Vizcarrondo, Perozo, Cichero, A Gonzalez (Maldonado 75), Di Giorgi, Rincon, Orozco (Fedor 66), Arismendi (Arango 63), Rondon.

July 13 - Cordoba
Brazil 4 (Alexandre Pato 27, 60, Neymar 49, 71)
Ecuador 2 (F Caicedo 37, 58)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Silvera (Uru)
Brazil: Julio Cesar - Maicon, Lucio, Thiago Silva, Andre Santos, Lucas Leiva, Ramires, Ganso (Elias 75), Robinho, Neymar (Lucas Silva 79), Alexandre Pato (Fred 84).
Ecuador: Elizaga - Reasco (Achilier 81), Araujo, Erazo, Ayovi, Minda, Noboa (Montano 89), Arroyo, Mendez (Mina 76), Benitez, F Caicedo.

COPA AMERICA – GROUP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Brazil	3	1	2	0	6	4	5
Venezuela	3	1	2	0	4	3	5
Paraguay	3	0	3	0	5	5	3
Ecuador	3	0	1	2	2	5	1

Group C

July 4 - San Juan
Uruguay 1 (Suarez 45)
Peru 1 (Guerrero 23)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Roldan (Col)
Uruguay: Muslera - M Pereira, Lugano, Victorino, Caceres, Perez, Arevalo, Lodeiro (Rodriguez 78), Forlan, Suarez, Cavani (Hernandez 78).
Peru: Fernandez - Revoredo, Acasiete, Rodriguez, Vilchez, Balbin, Cruzado, Guevara (Lobaton 57), Yotun (Vargas 59), Advincula (Chiroque 90+1), Guerrero.

July 4 - San Juan
Chile 2 (Paredes 66, Vidal 72)
Mexico 1 (Araujo 40)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Soto (Ven)
Chile: Bravo - Contreras, Ponce, Jara, Isla, Medel, Vidal, Beausejour (Paredes 59), Fernandez (Carmona 83), Sanchez, Suazo (Estrada 90+1).
Mexico: Michel - Araujo, Reynoso, Mier, Aguilar, Chavez, Reyes, Enriquez, Aquino (Peralta 74), Dos Santos, Marquez Lugo (Pacheco 88).

July 8 - Mendoza
Uruguay 1 (A Pereira 53)
Chile 1 (Sanchez 64)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Amarilla (Par)
Uruguay: Muslera - M Pereira (Lodeiro 79), Lugano, Coates, Caceres, Perez, Arevalo (Eguren 85), A Pereira, Cavani (Gonzalez 46), Forlan, Suarez.
Chile: Bravo - Contreras, Ponce, Jara (Valdivia 60), Isla, Medel, Vidal, Beausejour (Carmona 73), Jimenez, Sanchez, Suazo (Paredes 73).

July 8 - Mendoza
Peru 1 (Guerrero 82)
Mexico 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Pezzotta (Arg)
Peru: Fernandez - Carmona, Acasiete, Rodriguez, Vilchez, Balbin, Lobaton (Ballon 85), Cruzado (Guevara 76), Advincula (Yotun 46), Vargas, Guerrero.
Mexico: Michel - Chavez (Ponce 73), Araujo, Reynoso, Aguilar (Pacheco 46), Reyes, Enriquez, Mier, Aquino (Peralta 85), Dos Santos, Marquez Lugo.

July 12 - Mendoza
Chile 1 (Carrillo og 90+2)
Peru 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Fagundes (Bra)
Chile: Pinto - Silva (Medel 78), Ponce, Jara, Jimenez, Carmona, Estrada, Fierro (Sanchez 58), Beausejour, Paredes (Valdivia 58), Suazo.
Sent off: Beausejour 61min.
Peru: Libman - Acasiete (Vilchez 46), Revoredo, Corzo, Carmona, Ramos, Ballon, Guevara (Lobaton 69), Gonzalez (Carrillo 76), Ruidiaz, Chiroque.
Sent off: Carmona 61min.

July 12 - La Plata
Uruguay 1 (A Pereira 14)
Mexico 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Orosco (Bol)
Uruguay: Muslera - M Pereira, Lugano, Coates, A Pereira, Arevalo, Perez, Rodriguez (Eguren 83), Gonzalez (Lodeiro 68), Forlan (Abreu 89), Suarez.
Mexico: Michel - Mier, Araujo, Reynoso, Aguilar (Aquino 46), Reyes, Enriquez, Chavez, Ponce (Pacheco 70), Dos Santos (Peralta 46), Marquez Lugo.

COPA AMERICA – GROUP C	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Chile	3	2	1	0	4	2	7
Uruguay	3	1	2	0	3	2	5
Peru	3	1	1	1	2	2	4
Mexico	3	0	0	3	1	4	0

Top 2 in each group and the 2 3rd-placed teams with the best record qualified for quarter-finals

Quarter-finals

July 16 - Cordoba
Colombia 0
Peru 2 (Lobaton 101, Vargas 111)
Aet. **HT:** 0-0. **90mins:** 0-0. **Ref:** Chacon (Mex)
Colombia: L Martinez - Zuniga, Perea, Yepes, Armero, Sanchez (J Martinez 112), Aguilar (Gutierrez 104), Guarin, Moreno, A Ramos (Rodallega 72), Falcao.
Peru: Fernandez - Revoredo, Ramos, Rodriguez, Vilchez, Advincula (Lobaton 46), Balbin, Cruzado (Ballon 118), Vargas, Chiroque (Yotun 95), Guerrero.

July 16 - Santa Fe
Argentina 1 (Higuain 17)
Uruguay 1 (Perez 5)
Aet. **HT:** 1-1. **90mins:** 1-1. **Ref:** Amarilla (Par)
Uruguay 5-4 on pens
Argentina: Romero - Zabaleta, Burdisso, G Milito, Zanetti, Gago (Biglia 96), Mascherano, Di Maria (Pastore 72), Messi, Aguero (Tevez 83), Higuain.
Sent off: Mascherano 86min.
Uruguay: Muslera - M Pereira, Lugano, Victorino (Scotti 19), Caceres, Perez, Arevalo (Eguren 109), Gonzalez, A Pereira (Gargano 109), Forlan, Suarez.
Sent off: Perez 38min.
Penalty shoot-out: *(Argentina 1st) Messi 1-0, Forlan 1-1; Burdisso 2-1, Suarez 2-2; Tevez (saved) 2-2, Scotti 2-3; Pastore 3-3, Gargano 3-4; Higuain 4-4, Caceres 4-5.*

INDONESIA

Riedl replaced

Austrian coach Alfred Riedl was sacked as national coach after Djohar Arifin Husin's appointment as the new president of the Indonesian FA.

Riedl, who led Indonesia to second place in last year's ASEAN Cup, has been temporarily replaced by Wilhelmus Rijsbergen.

Farewell...Riedl was sacked

KUWAIT

Shots fired at friendly

A 6-0 win away to Lebanon ended in chaos when security guards in Beirut had to fire their weapons in the air to separate fighting players in the friendly.

The problems started when Kuwait's Waleed Ali came to blows with Abbas Attawi of Lebanon with seven minutes remaining and players from both sides joined in the brawl. Armed Lebanese guards broke up the melee, but further problems occurred after the referee abandoned the match and the two teams were leaving the pitch.

When Lebanon players charged at their opponents, the guards could no longer control the situation and shots were fired into the air to disperse the players.

Trouble maker...Ali

July 17 - La Plata
Brazil 0
Paraguay 0
Aet. **Ref:** Pezzotta (Arg)
Paraguay 2-0 on pens
Brazil: Julio Cesar - Maicon, Lucio, Thiago Silva, Andre Santos, Lucas Leiva, Ramires, Ganso (Lucas Silva 99), Robinho, Neymar (Fred 80), Alexandre Pato (Elano 110). *Sent off: Lucas Leiva 102min.*
Paraguay: Villar - Veron, Da Silva, Alcaraz, Torres (Marecos 70), Vera (E Barreto 63), Caceres, Riveros, Estigarribia, Haedo Valdez, Barrios (Perez 83). *Sent off: Alcaraz 102min.*
Penalty shoot-out: *(Brazil 1st) Elano (missed) 0-0, E Barreto (missed) 0-0; Thiago Silva (saved) 0-0, Estigarribia 0-1; Andre Santos (missed) 0-1, Riveros 0-2; Fred (missed) 0-2.*

July 17 - San Juan
Chile 1 (Suazo 69)
Venezuela 2 (Vizcarrondo 34, Cichero 80)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Vera (Ecu)
Chile: Bravo - Contreras, Ponce, Jara (Paredes 60), Isla, Medel, Carmona (Valdivia 46), Vidal, Jimenez (Munoz 83), Sanchez, Suazo.
Sent off: Medel 82min.
Venezuela: Vega - Rosales, Perozo, Vizcarrondo, Cichero, Rincon, Lucena, C Gonzalez (Moreno 89), Arango, Fedor (Rondon 59), Maldonado (Seijas 63).
Sent off: Rincon 90+4min.

Semi-finals

July 19 - La Plata
Peru 0
Uruguay 2 (Suarez 52, 57)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Orosco (Bol)
Peru: Fernandez - Carmona, Acasiete, Rodriguez, Vilchez, Advincula (Lobaton 60), Yotun (Chiroque 53), Balbin (Ballon 90), Cruzado, Vargas, Guerrero.
Sent off: Vargas 68min.
Uruguay: Muslera - M Pereira, Lugano, Coates, Caceres, Gonzalez, Gargano (Eguren 70), Arevalo, A Pereira, Forlan, Suarez (Hernandez 70).

July 20 - Mendoza
Paraguay 0
Venezuela 0
Aet. **Ref:** Chacon (Mex)
Paraguay 5-3 on pens
Paraguay: Villar - Caceres, Da Silva, Veron, Piris, E Barreto (Estigarribia 70), Ortigoza, Riveros, Santana, Haedo Valdez (Santa Cruz 73; Martinez 80), Barrios.
Sent off: Santana 102min.
Venezuela: Vega - Rosales, Perozo (Rey 46), Vizcarrondo, Cichero, Lucena, Di Giorgi, C Gonzalez (Maldonado 84), Arango, Moreno (Fedor 72), Rondon.
Penalty shoot-out: *(Paraguay 1st) Ortigoza 1-0, Maldonado 1-1; Barrios 2-1, Rey 2-2; Riveros 3-2, Lucena (saved) 3-2; Martinez 4-2, Fedor 4-3; Veron 5-3.*

See page 20 for Final and 3rd-place play-off results

PREVIOUS WINNERS (last 10)

1987	Uruguay
1989	Brazil
1991	Argentina
1993	Argentina
1995	Uruguay
1997	Brazil
1999	Brazil
2001	Colombia
2004	Brazil
2007	Brazil

2014 WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

ASIA SECTION
1st round

1st legs

June 29 - Tursunzade, Tajikistan
Afghanistan 0
Palestine 2 (Alyan 28, Amour 88)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 5,000. **Ref:** Al Ghafari (Jor)
Afghanistan: Yousufzai - Qazizadah (Hadid 80), Zohib Amiri, Sakhizada, Kohistani, Arzou, Walizada (H Barakzai 46), Zubyr Amiri (M Barakzai 46), Sharityar, Habib, Yusef.
Palestine: Shbair - Abu Saleh, Mahdi, Jarun, Bishara, Obeid, Yousef (Ismail 76), Wadi, A Abu Bilal (Nu'man 88), Alyan, Keshkesh (Amour 64).

June 29 - Dhaka
Bangladesh 3 (Emily 1, Hossain 22, Karim 56)
Pakistan 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 5,326. **Ref:** Abu Loum (Jor)
Bangladesh: Bhattacharjee - Nasir (Miah 75), Karim, Ariful Islam, Meshu, Hossain (Chowdhury 51), Mamunul Islam, Emily, Shakil Ahmed (Komol 83), Raju, Linkon.
Pakistan: Jaffar Khan - Iqbal, Manzoor Ahmed, Ishaq, Rehman, Bashir, A Ahmed, Rasool (Qasim 67), Mehmood (Akbar Khan 83), Abbas, Kaleemullah (Ikram 46).

June 29 - Phnom Penh
Cambodia 4 (Laboravy 51, El Nasa 57, 88, Sokumpheak 67)
Laos 2 (Phomsouvanh 9, 59)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Jahanbazi (Irn)
Cambodia: Mic - Tiny, Pancharong (Raksmey 87), Sokumpheak, Laboravy, Chhoeun (Soksana 80), Sothearath, Rithy, Sopanha, Rady, Saray (El Nasa 32).
Laos: C Souksavath - Phommapanya, M Souksavath, Souksavanh, Sayavutthi (Singto 62), Vongchiengkham, Sysomvang (Phettikone 80), Liththideth, Syphasay (Syvilay 71), Phomsouvanh, Kounvongsa.

June 29 - Kuala Lumpur
Malaysia 2 (Rahim 28, Radzak 55)
Taiwan 1 (Chen Po-liang 77)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 45,000. **Ref:** Mahapab (Tha)
Malaysia: Ramli - Omar, Fadhli Mohamad, Radzak, Rahim (Shaari 81), Sali (Saarani 46), Bakhtiar, Rohidan, Kunanlan, Remeli (Yahya 28), Zainal.
Taiwan: Lin Po-cheng - Chang Yung-hsien, Lin Cheng-yi, Tsai Hsien-tang, Chen Yu-lin, Chang Han (Chen Po-hao 90+4), Lo Chih-an, Lo Chih-en, Chan Che-yuan (Wu Chun-ching 73), Chen Yi-wei (Wu Pai-ho 75), Chen Po-liang.

June 29 - Ulaan Baatar
Mongolia 1 (Tsend-Ayush 48)
Myanmar 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Kim (SKo)
Mongolia: Tseveensuren - Olzvoi (Altankhuu 66), Garidmagnai, Chinzorig, Enkhjargal, Pagamsuren (T Tsedenbal 86), Tsend-Ayush, N Tsedenbal, Murun, B Erdenebayar, Togsbayar (Munkh-Erdene 69).
Myanmar: Kyaw Zin Htet - Yan Aung Win, Shwe Hlaing Win, Zaw Min Tun, Yan Aung Kyaw, Kyaw Ko Ko, David Htan, Pai Soe (Mai Aih Naing 84), Min Min Thu (Kyi Lin 65), Oo Zaw Zaw, Min Ko Ko.
Sent off: Kyaw Ko Ko.

June 29 - Kathmandu
Nepal 2 (A Gurung pen 14, J M Rai 71)
East Timor 1 (Juvitu 47)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 9,000. **Ref:** Sabbagh (Leb)
Nepal: Chemjong - Rabin Shrestha (Chettri 58), Maharjan, Chand, Khadka (B Gurung 80), A Gurung, J M Rai, S Rai, Shiva Shrestha (Silwal 66), S Thapa, Khawas. *Sent off: Khawas 54min.*
East Timor: Adi - Monterio, Do Carmo, Carlos, Juvitu, Eric (Valadares 46), Eusebio, J J Pereira, Barbosa (Entil 46), Ary, Quito (Luzinho 78).

June 29 - Colombo
Sri Lanka 1 (Gunarathna 43)
Philippines 1 (Burkey 50)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 4,000. **Ref:** Shamsuzzaman (Ban)
Sri Lanka: Fernando - Warakagoda, Wijesiri, Ruwanthilake, Rahuman, Izzadeen (Anthony 67), Gunarathna, Tharaka (Lankesara 62), Kaiz, Pushpakumara (Zain 83), Kumara.
Philippines: Etheridge - Gier, Del Rosario, J Younghusband, Ott, Mulders, P Younghusband (Burkey 40; Araneta 76), Borromeo, Guirado, Caligdong, Schrock.

June 29 - Ho Chi Minh City
Vietnam 6 (Le Cong Vinh 19, 36, pen 39, Pham Thanh Luong 62, Nguyen Ngoc Thanh 67, Nguyen Van Quyet 87)
Macau 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 20,000. **Ref:** Mashentsev (Kyr)
Vietnam: Nguyen Manh Dung - Doan Viet Cuong, Nguyen Anh Tuan, Pham Thanh Luong (Hoang Dinh Tung 79), Nguyen Van Quyet, Le Cong Vinh, Nguyen Trong Hoang, Nguyen Quang Hai (Nguyen Ngoc Thanh 63), Nguyen Thanh Long Giang, Huynh Quang Thanh, Phan Van Tai Em (Nguyen Minh Chau 46).
Macau: Leong Chon-kit - Kong Cheng-hou (Lam Ka-chon 42), Lao Pak-kin, Geofredo Cheung, Cheang Cheng-leong, Che Chi-man, Soares Monteiro, Ho Man-hou (Leong Ka-hang 46), De Almeida, Kwok Siu-tin, Wong Vernon.

2nd legs

*July 2 - Kathmandu, Nepal**
East Timor 0
Nepal 5 (A Gurung pen 3, Silwal 56, J M Rai 60, J Shrestha 89, Sujal Shrestha 90)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Lee (SKo)
Nepal 7-1 on agg
East Timor: Adi - Monterio, Do Carmo (J J Pereira 43), Luzinho, Carlos (Carson 22), Juvitu, Natalino De Jesus (Mota 52), Barbosa, Da Silva, Do Carmo, Entil.
Nepal: Chemjong - Maharjan, Chettri, Chand, Khadka, A Gurung, J M Rai (Sujal Shrestha 64), S Rai (Shiva Shrestha 82), Silwal (Ojha 72), S Thapa, J Shrestha.
**Game played in Nepal because East Timor do not have an international standard stadium*

July 3 - Vientiane
Laos 6 (Singto 19, 55, Sayavutthi 31, Syphasay 47, Phapouvanin 94, Sysomvang 112)
Cambodia 2 (Chhoeun 45, Sokumpheak 75)
Aet. **HT:** 2-1. **90mins:** 4-2. **Ref:** Sato (Jap)
Laos 8-6 on agg
Laos: C Souksavath - Phommapanya, M Souksavath, Souksavanh, Inthammavong, Sayavutthi, Vongchiengkham, Singto (Phapouvanin 89), Liththideth, Syphasay (Sysomvang 73), Phomsouvanh.
Cambodia: Mic - Tiny, Pancharong, Sokumpheak, Laboravy, Chhoeun, Sothearath, El Nasa (Tith Dina 54), Rady (Raksmey 49), Rithy, Sopanha.

July 3 - Macau
Macau 1 (Leong Ka-hang 60)
Vietnam 7 (Le Cong Vinh 3, 29, 43, 75, 82, Nguyen Quang Hai 24, Huynh Quang Thanh 87)
HT: 0-4. **Ref:** Auda (Irq)
Vietnam 13-1 on agg
Macau: Ho Man-fai - Lao Pak-kin (Kwok Siu-tin 39), Geofredo Cheung, Cheang Cheng-leong, Che Chi-min (Chan Man-hei 77), Leong Chong-in (Leong Ka-hang 50), Monteiro Soares, Ho Man-hou, Torrao, Lam Ka-chon, Lam Ka-pou.
Vietnam: Nguyen Manh Dung - Doan Viet Cuong (Nguyen Ngoc Thanh 60), Truong Dinh Luat, Nguyen Minh Chau, Pham Thanh Luong (Nguyen Ngoc Duy 45+1), Nguyen Van Quyet, Le Cong Vinh, Nguyen Quang Hai, Vo Duy Nam (Nguyen Trong Hoang 74), Nguyen Thanh Long Giang, Huynh Quang Thanh.

July 3 - Yangon
Myanmar 2 (Pai Soe 61, Mai Aih Naing 85)
Mongolia 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Liu (HK)
Myanmar 2-1 on agg
Myanmar: Kyaw Zin Htet - Yan Aung Win, Zaw Min Tun, Yan Aung Kyaw, David Htan (Kyi Lin 79), Pai Soe, Min Min Thu (Kyaw Zayar Win 58), Oo Zaw Zaw, Mai Aih Naing, Khin Maung Lwin, Yan Paing (Soe Min Oo 90).
Mongolia: Tseveensuren - Olzvoi, Garidmagnai, Munkh-Erdene, Chinzorig, Enkhjargal, Pagamsuren (Davaa-Ochir 78), Tsend-Ayush, N Tsedenbal (Munkh-Od 89), Murun, B Erdenebayar.
Sent off: Olzvoi 90+1min.

July 3 - Lahore
Pakistan 0
Bangladesh 0
Ref: Abdulnabi (Bhr)
Bangladesh 3-0 on agg
Pakistan: Jaffar Khan - Iqbal, Manzoor Ahmed, Ishaq, Bashir, Qasim (Kaleemullah 33), A Ahmed, Rasool (Ikram 69), Mehmood (Akbar Khan 79), Abbas, Muhammad Ahmed.
Bangladesh: Bhattacharjee - Nasir, Miah (Meshu 62), Karim, Ariful Islam, Mamunul Islam, Chowdhury, Emily, Shakil Ahmed (Hossain 62), Raju (Komol 57), Linkon.

July 3 - Al Ram
Palestine 1 (Wadi 11)
Afghanistan 1 (Arzou 63)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Al Dosari (Qat)
Palestine 3-1 on agg
Palestine: Saidawi - Abu Saleh, Bahdari, Jarun, Bishara, Wadi, Yousef (Ismail 77), Amour (Abugharqud 85), Alyan, Obeid, A Abu Bilal (Nu'man 60).
Afghanistan: Yousufzai - Hadid (Waheed 85), Zohib Amiri, Sakhizada, Kohistani, Arzou, Walizada (Hashemi 45+1), Sharityar, Habib, M Barakzai (Niazi 61), Yusef.

July 3 - Manila
Philippines 4 (Caligdong 19, P Younghusband 43, pen 57, Guirado 51)
Sri Lanka 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Kim (SKo)
Philippines 5-1 on agg
Philippines: Etheridge - Gier, Del Rosario, J Younghusband, Ott, Mulders, P Younghusband (Araneta 65), Borromeo, Guirado, Caligdong (Gener 77), Schrock.
Sri Lanka: Fernando - Warakagoda, Wijesiri, Ruwanthilake, Rahuman (Tharaka 36), Izzadeen, Gunarathna (Zain 75), Kaiz (Meera 59), Anthony, Kumara, Lankesara. *Sent off: Ruwanthilake 89min.*

Histroy boy...Wadi (in green)

PAKISTAN

Sport returns

In the country's first major international sporting event held on home soil since eight people were killed in a gun attack by terrorists on the Sri Lanka cricket team bus in Lahore two years ago, Pakistan drew 0-0 with Bangladesh in a World Cup qualifier. The hosts went out 3-0 on aggregate.

PALESTINE

Historic game

A 1-1 draw in the first-ever World Cup qualifier to be played in Palestine enabled the home side to overcome Afghanistan 3-1 on aggregate and go through to the second qualifying round.

Houssam Wadi scored Palestine's goal in the draw at the Faisal Al Husseini International Stadium.

9 goals scored by golden boot winner Souleymane Coulibaly of Ivory Coast in the Under-17 World Cup

PHILIPPINES

World Cup success

German coach Michael Weiss has taken the national side to Asia's second qualifying round of the World Cup for the first time in the Philippines' history, with a 5-1 aggregate win over Sri Lanka.

"The team have improved a great deal over the past months,

INTERNATIONALS

July 3 - Taipei
Taiwan 3 (Chang Han 31, Chen Po-liang pen 44, Xavier Chen pen 75)
Malaysia 2 (Radzak 8, Rahim 40)
HT: 2-2. **Ref:** Vo (Vie)
Agg 4-4. Malaysia on away goals
Taiwan: Lin Po-cheng (Wei Sheng-hsin 45+1) - Chang Yung-hsien, Lin Cheng-yi, Tsai Hsien-tang, Chen Yu-lin, Chang Han, Xavier Chen, Lo Chih-an (Wu Pai-ho 82), Lo Chih-en (Wu Chun-ching 65), Chan Che-yuan, Chen Po-liang.
Malaysia: Ramli - Jasuli, Omar, Shas, Radzak, Rahim, Talaha, Rohidan, Yahya (Saarani 77), Kunanlan, Zainal (Chanturu 65).

CONCACAF SECTION
1st round

1st legs

June 15 - Couva, Trinidad
Montserrat 2 (Hodgson 44, 86)
Belize 5 (McCaulay 24, 75, 83, Roches 50, Kuylen 53)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 150. **Ref:** Willett (A&B)
Montserrat: Hilton - Wade (Bramble 77), Griffith, Allen, W Dyer, Roach, Hodgson, Mendes, Lee, A Dyer, O'Garro.
Belize: Moody-Orio - Mendez (Simpson 46), Eiley, Kuylen, Gaynair, Smith, McCaulay, Roches (Jimenez 82), Symms, E Trapp, Benavides (D Trapp 64).

July 2 - Providenciales
Turks & Caicos Islands 0
Bahamas 4 (Jean 32, 61, Hepple pen 36, Louis 90+2)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 1,021. **Ref:** Cruz (CR)
Turks & Caicos Islands: Azemard - D Glinton (Francois 46), Gibson, Speer (Brumvert 75), P Glinton, G Glinton, Jean (McKnight 67), Shearer, Forbes, Brough, Singh.
Bahamas: Raynaldo Sturrup - Sealey, Veth, Forbes, Altidor (Raymorn Sturrup 76), Demont Mitchell, Bethel (Sykes 76), St Fleur (Louis 84), Jean, Hepple, Thompson.

July 3 - Charlotte Amalie
US Virgin Islands 2 (Lesmond 7, Klopp 57)
British Virgin Islands 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 350. **Ref:** Navarro (Can)
US Virgin Islands: Pieffer - Smith, Van Gurp, Augustus, George, Schuster, Taylor, Klopp, Laurencin (Nissman 74), D Thomas (Beharry 62), Lesmond (Fuller 87).
British Virgin Islands: Daly - Samuel, Wellington, Smith (Davis 42), Vanquever Frett (James 68), Demming, Caesar, Joel Fahie (Septus 54), Telemache, Russell, Peters.
Sent off: Samuel 60min.

*July 8 - San Cristobal, Dominican Republic**
Anguilla 0
Dominican Republic 2 (Peralta 8, Fana 42)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Brizan (T&T)
Anguilla: Liddie - Jeffers, Findlay, K Kentish (Burris 55), Hawley, A Richardson, Williams, G Connor, Rodgers, Brooks (Browne 82), Griffith (K Richardson 20).
Dominican Republic: Lloyd - Cruz, Garcia, Ramirez, Severino, Fana, Batista (Casanova 89), Flores (Meyreles 55), Peralta (Perez 76), Sanchez, Rodriguez.
**Game played in Dominican Republic because Anguilla do not have an international standard stadium*

July 8 - Oranjestad
Aruba 4 (Santos de Gouveia 13, M Escalona 46, Gomez 74, D Abdul 84)
St Lucia 2 (K Edward 19, Frederick 46)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Foster (Cay)
Aruba: E Abdul - Croes, Ruiz, Baten, Aparicio, Barradas (Cruden 68), M Escalona (Gomez 61), Santos de Gouveia (Schwengle 84), D Abdul, Quandt, Thode.
St Lucia: Cassius - B Edward, Frederick, Abbot, E George, Pierre (Valcin 68), K Edward, Paul, Jamil Joseph, G George, Williams.
Sent off: B Edward 83min.

2nd legs

July 9 - Nassau
Bahamas 6 (Demont Mitchell 2, St Fleur 17, 64, 73, 86, 90)
Turks & Caicos Islands 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Santos (PR)
Bahamas 10-0 on agg
Bahamas: Raynaldo Sturrup - Sealey, Veth, Forbes, Altidor (Raymorn Sturrup 67), Demont Mitchell, Bethel (Pratt 74), St Fleur, Sykes (Larson 43), Hepple, Thompson.
Turks & Caicos Islands: Jones - Forbes, D Glinton, G Glinton, Brough (Hassan 75), Rene, Speer (P Glinton 46), Singh (McKnight 72), Fenelus, Shearer, Gibson.

July 10 - Road Town
British Virgin Islands 1 (Peters 38)
US Virgin Islands 2 (D Thomas 2, Klopp 90+3)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Morrison (Jam)
US Virgin Islands 4-1 on agg
British Virgin Islands: Daly - James, Smith (Wellington 76), Vanquever Frett (Telemache 55), Demming, Caesar, Joel Fahie, Septus (Felix 81), Davis, Russell, Peters.
US Virgin Islands: Pieffer - Augustus, Van Gurp, Lesmond, Taylor, D Thomas (Pierre 75), Laurencin, George (Bailey 46), Smith, Klopp, Beharry (Nissman 46).

July 10 - San Cristobal
Dominican Republic 4 (Navarro 18, 42, Sanchez 27, Fana 58)
Anguilla 0
HT: 3-0. **Ref:** Brea (Cub)
Dominican Republic 6-0 on agg
Dominican Republic: Lloyd - Cruz, Garcia, Ramirez, Severino (Ozuna 64), Fana, Navarro (Encarnacion 71), Peralta (Perez 60), Sanchez, Rodriguez, Ubiera.
Anguilla: Liddie - Jeffers, Findlay, K Richardson, Hawley (Hughes 87), A Richardson, Williams, G Connor, Rodgers, Brooks (Hodge 76), Bailey (Browne 64).

July 12 - Castries
St Lucia 4 (Jamil Joseph 14, 20, 71, Frederick 73)
Aruba 2 (Gomez 44, 75)
Aet. **HT:** 2-1. **90mins:** 4-2. **Ref:** Lancaster (Guy)
Agg 6-6. St Lucia 5-4 on pens
St Lucia: Cassius - F Joseph, Frederick, Abbot, Justin, E George (Charles 66), Pierre, Jamil Joseph (Paul 84), Hunte, G George (K Edward 56), Williams.
Aruba: E Abdul - Croes, Ruiz (Kock 66), Baten, Quandt (Schwengle 44), Valdez, Barradas, Aparicio, Gomez, Santos de Gouveia (Cruden 60), Bergen.

July 17 - San Pedro Sula, Honduras
Belize 3 (Jimenez 24, McCaulay 61, Mendez 63)
Montserrat 1 (Hodgson 59)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Reyna (Gtm)
Belize 8-3 on agg
Belize: Moody-Orio - Villanueva, Mendez, Gaynair, Symms, Kuylen, Tasher, Simpson, D Trapp (Benavides 46), Jimenez (Mariano 66), McCaulay.
Montserrat: Sweeney - Joseph, Allen, N Dyer (Lee 62), Griffith, A Dyer, O'Garro, Roach, Bramble (Campbell 62), Hodgson, Petrie.

JORDAN TOURNAMENT

In Amman

Semi-finals

July 13
Kuwait 2 (Awad 66, Fadhel 84)
Iraq 0
HT: 0-0
Sent off: Hussein (Iraq) 68min

July 13
Jordan 1 (Abdel Fattah 9)
Saudi Arabia 1 (Al Shamrani 90+4)
HT: 1-0
Saudi Arabia 4-3 on pens

3rd-place play-off

July 16
Iraq 1 (Karim pen 15)
Jordan 1 (Al Dmeiri 5)
HT: 1-1
Jordan 5-4 on pens

Final

July 16
Kuwait 1 (Al Mutawa 70)
Saudi Arabia 0
HT: 0-0

FRIENDLIES

Saturday, June 25
June 25 - Nairobi
Kenya 1 (Oliech 10)
Sudan 2 (Musa 4, Abdelgadir 27)
HT: 1-2

Wednesday, June 29
June 29 - Arbil
Iraq 1 (Abdulzahra 87)
Syria 2 (Al Hussain 15, Sabag 75)
HT: 0-1

Saturday, July 2
July 2 - Beirut
Lebanon 0
Kuwait 6 (Neda 23, 33, Al Sulaiman 54, 68, Jumah 62, 78)
HT: 0-2

Tuesday, July 5
July 5 - Istanbul, Turkey
Jordan 1 (Deeb 10)
Syria 3 (Ismail 25, Al Hussain 40, Al Sayed 88)
HT: 1-2

Wednesday, July 6
July 6 - Beirut, Lebanon
Kuwait 1 (Al Sulaiman 45)
Oman 1 (Rabia 30)
HT: 1-1

July 6 - Mzuzu
Malawi 0
Namibia 1 (Urikhob 85)
HT: 0-0

Thursday, July 7
July 7 - Honiara
Solomon Islands 2 (Luwi 61, Totori 64)
Vanuatu 1 (Michel 89)
HT: 0-0

Friday, July 8
July 8 - Istanbul, Turkey
Jordan 4 (Hayel 62, Abdel Fattah 65, Hashhash 90, Deeb 90+2)
Yemen 0
HT: 0-0

Saturday, July 9
July 9 - Beirut
Lebanon 0
Oman 1 (Al Sadi 86)
HT: 0-0

July 9 - Honiara
Solomon Islands 0
Vanuatu 0

Sunday, July 10
July 10 - Male
Maldives 1 (Nasir 44)
India 1 (Chhetri 18)
HT: 1-1

Wednesday, July 13
July 13 - Labasa
Fiji 2 (Baleitoga 13, Naqeleca 90)
Vanuatu 0
HT: 1-0

Thursday, July 14
July 14 - Buri Ram
Thailand 1 (Teerasil 2)
Myanmar 0
HT: 1-0

Friday, July 15
July 15 - Lautoka
Fiji 1 (Avinesh 46)
Vanuatu 2 (August 7, Tasso 21)
HT: 0-2

July 15 - Seeb
Oman 1 (Said 61)
Syria 1 (Ismail 85)
HT: 0-0

July 15 - Buri Ram
Thailand 1 (Jakkraphan pen 17)
Myanmar 1 (Pai Soe 63)
HT: 1-0

Sunday, July 17
July 17 - Tehran
Iran 1 (J Hosseini 18)
Madagascar 0
HT: 1-0
Iran: Rahmati - P Nouri (Najafabadi 81), J Hosseini, Aghili, K Heydari, Baeo (Haddadifar 46), Karimi (M Zare 67), Hajsafy (Pooladi 46), Ansarifard, Ouladi (Daghighi 46), Nourozi (Mahini 68).

July 17 - Doha
Qatar 1 (Khalfan 74)
India 2 (Chhetri pen 16, S Singh 73)
HT: 0-1

particularly in regards to attitude," says Weiss. "We have spent much on physical training so they are fit to compete at this level.

"They used to stick to long-ball tactics but now the team play a good passing game. We have an excellent goalkeeper in Neil Etheridge, who is playing with Fulham, and German-based Manuel Ott is good in driving the midfield."

Winner...Philippines' Angel Guirado takes on Sri Lanka

ST LUCIA

Hat-trick hero Joseph

A Jamil Joseph hat-trick inspired St Lucia to come back from a 4-2 first-leg deficit to Aruba and then go on to win the penalty shoot-out in their World Cup qualifier.

Jelano Cruden was the unfortunate man to miss for Aruba as St Lucia won 5-4 on spot-kicks.

USA

Finalists meet again

Beaten CONCACAF Gold Cup finalists USA get an early chance to avenge their June loss to Mexico in Pasadena's Rose Bowl when they host their rivals in a friendly at Philadelphia on August 10.

The US will also play friendlies at home to Costa Rica on September 2 in Los Angeles and Belgium in Brussels four days later.

VIETNAM

Eight in two games

Le Cong Vinh scored eight goals in his first two 2014 World Cup qualifiers. The three-times Vietnamese footballer of the year followed up his first-leg hat-trick with five goals in the 7-1 away win in Macau.

July 17 - Al Ain City
United Arab Emirates 6 (Khalil 9, 18, 54, Al Shehhi 22, Al Kamali pen 41, Awana pen 79)
Lebanon 2 (El Ali 29, 67)
HT: 4-1

Monday, July 18
July 18 - Singapore
Singapore 3 (Duric 17, 54, Nawaz 83)
Taiwan 2 (Lo Chih-an 48, Hiang Shih-lu 62)
HT: 1-0

FRIENDLY FIXTURES

30.07.11 Vanuatu v Solomon Islands (Port Vila)
09.08.11 Ghana v Nigeria (Watford, England)
10.08.11 Albania v Montenegro (Tirana)
Austria v Slovakia (Klagenfurt)
Azerbaijan v Macedonia (Baku)
Belarus v Bulgaria (Minsk)
Bolivia v Panama (Santa Cruz)
Bosnia-Herzegovina v Greece (Sarajevo)
China v Jamaica (Hefei)
Cyprus v Moldova
England v Holland (London)
France v Chile (Montpellier)
Gabon v Guinea (Paris)
Gambia v DR Congo (Banjul)
Germany v Brazil (Stuttgart)
Haiti v Trinidad & Tob (Port-au-Prince)
Honduras v Peru (New York)
Hungary v Iceland (Budapest)
Iran v Venezuela (Tehran)
Italy v Spain (Bari)
Ivory Coast v Israel (Geneva, Swi)
Japan v South Korea (Sapporo)
Kazakhstan v Syria (Astana)
Latvia v Finland (Riga)
Liberia v Angola (Monrovia)
Liechtenstein v Switzerland (Vaduz)
Lithuania v Armenia (Kaunas)
Malta v Central African Republic
Norway v Czech Republic (Oslo)
Poland v Georgia (Lubin)
Portugal v Luxembourg (Faro)
Republic of Ireland v Croatia (Dublin)
Romania v Argentina (Bucharest)
Russia v Serbia (Moscow)
Scotland v Denmark (Glasgow)
Senegal v Morocco (Dakar)
Slovenia v Belgium (Ljubljana)
South Africa v Burkina Faso (Jo'burg)
Tahiti v Solomon Islands
Tunisia v Mali (Monastir)
Turkey v Estonia (Istanbul)
Ukraine v Sweden (Kharkiv)
United States v Mexico (Philadelphia)
Wales v Australia (Cardiff)
Zimbabwe v Zambia (Harare)
13.08.11 Tahiti v Solomon Islands
14.08.11 Liberia v Tanzania (Monrovia)

UNDER-17 WORLD CUP

In Mexico

Group A
June 18: Congo 1 Holland 0; Mexico 3 North Korea 1.
June 21: North Korea 1 Holland 1; Mexico 2 Congo 1.
June 24: North Korea 1 Congo 1; Mexico 3 Holland 2.

UNDER-17 WORLD CUP – GROUP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Mexico	3	3	0	0	8	4	9
Congo	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
North Korea	3	0	2	1	3	5	2
Holland	3	0	1	2	3	5	1

Group B
June 18: France 3 Argentina 0; Japan 1 Jamaica 0.
June 21: Japan 1 France 1; Jamaica 1 Argentina 2.
June 24: Japan 3 Argentina 1; Jamaica 1 France 1.

UNDER-17 WORLD CUP – GROUP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Japan	3	2	1	0	5	2	7
France	3	1	2	0	5	2	5
Argentina	3	1	0	2	3	7	3
Jamaica	3	0	1	2	2	4	1

Group C
June 19: Rwanda 0 England 2; Uruguay 3 Canada 0.
June 22: Uruguay 1 Rwanda 0; Canada 2 England 2.
June 25: Uruguay 0 England 2; Canada 0 Rwanda 0.

UNDER-17 WORLD CUP – GROUP C	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
England	3	2	1	0	6	2	7
Uruguay	3	2	0	1	4	2	6
Canada	3	0	2	1	2	5	2
Rwanda	3	0	1	2	0	3	1

Group D
June 19: Uzbekistan 1 New Zealand 4; United States 3 Czech Republic 0.
June 22: United States 1 Uzbekistan 2; Czech Republic 1 New Zealand 0.
June 25: United States 0 New Zealand 0; Czech Republic 1 Uzbekistan 2.

UNDER-17 WORLD CUP – GROUP D	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Uzbekistan	3	2	0	1	5	6	6
United States	3	1	1	1	4	2	4
New Zealand	3	1	1	1	4	2	4
Czech Rep	3	1	0	2	2	5	3

Group E
June 20: Germany 6 Ecuador 1; Burkina Faso 0 Panama 1.
June 23: Burkina Faso 0 Germany 3; Panama 1 Ecuador 2.
June 26: Burkina Faso 0 Ecuador 2; Panama 0 Germany 2.

UNDER-17 WORLD CUP – GROUP E	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Germany	3	3	0	0	11	1	9
Ecuador	3	2	0	1	5	7	6
Panama	3	1	0	2	2	4	3
Burkina Faso	3	0	0	3	0	6	0

Group F
June 20: Brazil 3 Denmark 0; Australia 2 Ivory Coast 1.
June 23: Australia 0 Brazil 1; Ivory Coast 4 Denmark 2.
June 26: Australia 1 Denmark 1; Ivory Coast 3 Brazil 3.

UNDER-17 WORLD CUP – GROUP F	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Brazil	3	2	1	0	7	3	7
Ivory Coast	3	1	1	1	8	7	4
Australia	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Denmark	3	0	1	2	3	8	1

Top 2 in each group and the 4 3rd-placed teams with best record qualified for 1st knockout round

1st knockout round
June 29: Uzbekistan 4 Australia 0; Brazil 2 Ecuador 0; Congo 1 Uruguay 2; Japan 6 New Zealand 0.
June 30: Germany 4 United States 0; England 1 Argentina 1 (England 4-2 on pens); France 3 Ivory Coast 2; Mexico 2 Panama 0.

Quarter-finals
July 3: Uruguay 2 Uzbekistan 0; Japan 2 Brazil 3.
July 4: Germany 3 England 2; France 1 Mexico 2.

Semi-finals
July 7: Uruguay 3 Brazil 0; Germany 2 Mexico 3.

3rd-place play-off
July 10: Brazil 3 Germany 4.

Final
July 10 - Mexico City (Azteca)
Uruguay 0
Mexico 2 (Briseno 31, Casillas 90+2)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 98,943. **Ref:** Moen (Nor)
Uruguay: Cubero - Velazquez, Silva, Moreira (Canobra 69), Pais, Alvarez, Mendez (Charamoni 79), Aguirre (San Martin 26), Varela, Gianni Rodriguez, Furia.
Mexico: Sanchez - F Flores, C Guzman, Briseno, Caballero, Escamilla, Espericueta, Fierro (Casillas 85), A Gonzalez, Bueno (Gracia 75), Tostado (Gomez 63).

PREVIOUS WINNERS
1985 Nigeria
1987 Soviet Union
1989 Saudi Arabia
1991 Ghana
1993 Nigeria
1995 Ghana
1997 Brazil
1999 Brazil
2001 France
2003 Brazil
2005 Mexico
2007 Nigeria
2009 Switzerland

WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

In Germany

Group A
June 26: Nigeria 0 France 1; Germany 2 Canada 1.
June 30: Canada 0 France 4; Germany 1 Nigeria 0.
July 5: France 2 Germany 4; Canada 0 Nigeria 1.

WOMEN'S WORLD CUP – GROUP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Germany	3	3	0	0	7	3	9
France	3	2	0	1	7	4	6
Nigeria	3	1	0	2	1	2	3
Canada	3	0	0	3	1	7	0

Group B
June 27: Japan 2 New Zealand 1; Mexico 1 England 1.
July 1: Japan 4 Mexico 0; New Zealand 1 England 2.
July 5: England 2 Japan 0; New Zealand 2 Mexico 2.

WOMEN'S WORLD CUP – GROUP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
England	3	2	1	0	5	2	7
Japan	3	2	0	1	6	3	6
Mexico	3	0	2	1	3	7	2
New Zealand	3	0	1	2	4	6	1

Group C
June 28: Colombia 0 Sweden 1; United States 2 North Korea 0.
July 2: North Korea 0 Sweden 1; United States 3 Colombia 0.
July 6: Sweden 2 United States 1; North Korea 0 Colombia 0.

WOMEN'S WORLD CUP – GROUP C	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sweden	3	3	0	0	4	1	9
United States	3	2	0	1	6	2	6
North Korea	3	0	1	2	0	3	1
Colombia	3	0	1	2	0	4	1

Group D
June 29: Norway 1 Equatorial Guinea 0; Brazil 1 Australia 0.
July 3: Australia 3 Equatorial Guinea 2; Brazil 3 Norway 0.
July 6: Equatorial Guinea 0 Brazil 3; Australia 2 Norway 1.

WOMEN'S WORLD CUP – GROUP D	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Brazil	3	3	0	0	7	0	9
Australia	3	2	0	1	5	4	6
Norway	3	1	0	2	2	5	3
Equat Guinea	3	0	0	3	2	7	0

Top 2 in each group qualified for quarter-finals

Quarter-finals
July 9: England 1 France 1 (aet, France 4-3 on pens); Germany 0 Japan 1 (aet).
July 10: Sweden 3 Australia 1; Brazil 2 United States 2 (aet, United States 5-3 on pens).

Semi-finals
July 13: France 1 United States 3; Japan 3 Sweden 1.

3rd-place play-off
July 16: Sweden 2 France 1.

Final
July 17 - Frankfurt
Japan 2 (Miyama 81, Sawa 117)
United States 2 (Morgan 69, Wambach 104)
Aet. **HT:** 0-0. **90mins:** 1-1. **Att:** 48,817.
Ref: Steinhaus (Ger)
Japan 3-1 on pens
Japan: Kaihori - Kinga, Iwashimizu, Kumagai, Sakaguchi, Ando (Nagasoto 66), Miyama, Kawasumi, Sawa, Ohno (Maruyama 66; Iwabuchi 119), Sameshima. *Sent off: Iwashimizu 120+1min.*
United States: Solo - Rampone, Le Peilbet, Boxx, O'Reilly, Lloyd, Krieger, Cheney (Morgan 46), Rapinoe (Heath 114), Buehler, Wambach.

PREVIOUS WINNERS
1991 United States
1995 Norway
1999 United States
2003 Germany
2007 Germany

UNDER-17 WORLD CUP
Stylish Mexicans triumph on home soil

Final celebration...delighted Mexico players mob captain Briseno after he put them ahead in the World U-17 Final against Uruguay

A crowd of 98,943 – a record for a world junior competition – saw Mexico win their second Under-17 World title in six years as they beat Uruguay 2-0 in the final at the Azteca Stadium in Mexico City.

Goals from captain Antonio Briseno and substitute Giovani Casillas gave the free-spirited Mexicans a deserved victory against a Uruguayan side who had been set up to contain the hosts and attack on the counter.

"We had dreamed about it [the victory] at some point. Now it's crystallised," said coach Raul Gutierrez. "We have to thank the people, the scenery of it all. We're so very proud of the players and the magic they put on the pitch. I'm so grateful to even be here."

To cap a memorable fortnight, Mexican players achieved a clean sweep of FIFA's individual awards. Headline-grabbing striker Julio Gomez – the scorer of two Mexico goals in a dramatic semi-final victory over Germany – won the Golden Ball as the tournament's best player, while team-mates Jorge Espericueta and striker Carlos Fierro took the silver and bronze awards respectively.

Ivory Coast forward Souleymane Coulibaly claimed the Golden Boot for the tournament's top scorer with a record-equalling tally of nine goals from just four games, including two hat-tricks.

However, for all the optimism of the host-nation's triumph, it remains to be seen whether this latest generation of Mexico players can go on to replicate the success at senior level. There were high hopes for the class of 2005 that won the title in Peru but players such as Giovani Dos Santos, Carlos Vela and Efrain Juarez have only enjoyed limited success in European club football since the triumph. Indeed, Javier Hernandez, the Mexican who has made the biggest breakthrough at the top end of the European game, was not even selected for the tournament.

The mastermind of this success, Gutierrez, developed a terrific team-spirit thanks to being able to work with the squad for the previous year. Their sense of unity shone through as the hosts won all seven games, playing an attractive, expansive style of football.

Even so, Mexico's campaign began stutteringly when they laboured to a 3-1 win over North Korea in their opening group match – only asserting themselves after the Koreans had been reduced to 10 men. A more comfortable victory against a physically imposing Congo side followed, but Holland – the European Under-17 champions – would provide a far sterner test.

The Dutch, who had only picked up one point from their opening two group games, started nervously and allowed Mexico to go into the break 2-0 ahead. A dramatic second-half turnaround saw them pull it back to 2-2, only for Arturo Gonzalez to grab a dramatic 94th-minute winner for the Mexicans.

After easing past Panama in the first knockout round, Mexico disposed of highly fancied France in the quarter-finals, courtesy of a powerful strike by Kevin Escamilla and a wonderful individual effort from Fierro. Next up were the Germans who, coached by former international Steffen Freund, were the outstanding attacking team of the finals – a skilful but disciplined side who had scored 18 goals and let in just three at the tournament.

Julio Gomez had given the hosts the perfect start with a strike after just three minutes but Samed Yesil – who had scored twice as Germany survived a late scare to see off England in the quarter-finals – equalised within seven minutes in what would prove to be the match of the tournament.

Emre Can headed the Europeans in front on the hour and looked to be sending Mexico out of the competition. Then, in the 76th minute, Jorge Espericueta's corner flew directly into the net as Gomez

and a German defender collided on the goal line. Home celebrations were tempered by the fact that Gomez was carried off on a stretcher with blood pouring from his head. After receiving stitches, he returned to the action with his head bandaged and went on to score a dramatic winner in injury time with a stunning overhead kick.

Uruguay reached their first Under-17 Final from the other side of the draw having seen off Brazil in their semi-final. The Brazilians attacked with intent, particularly through Chelsea-bound Lucas Piazon, but found themselves taken out by their counter-attacking opponents, who romped home 3-0.

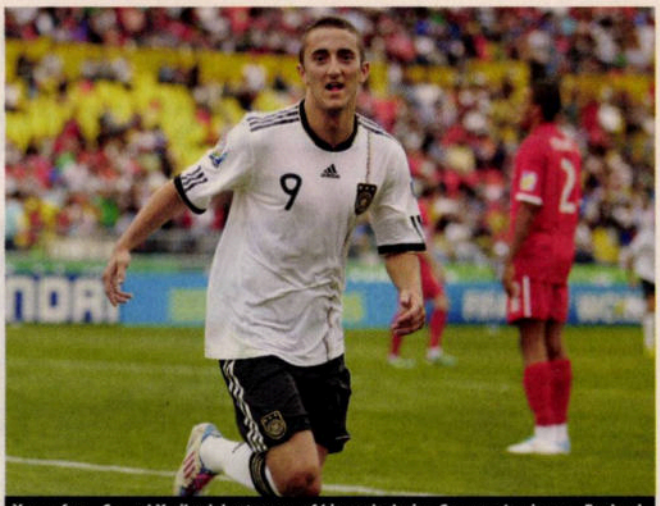
In the final, Uruguay once again opted to sit back patiently, blocking midfield and making it very difficult for Mexico to engage in their short-passing, attacking game. However, the young Mexicans stuck to their guns, refusing to resort to the long ball and eventually got their reward. Their opener came just after the half-hour mark when a cross from the right side was flicked on by top-scorer Fierro, enabling captain Antonio Briseno to slam home a right-foot volley.

As Uruguay were forced to throw caution to the wind in search of an equaliser, substitute Giovani Casillas latched on to a pass from Gonzalez to score yet another Mexican injury-time goal – clinching a 2-0 victory and sparking wild celebrations in the Azteca.

Mexico's triumph was in marked contrast to the other countries who had been tipped for success before the tournament had kicked-off.

Argentina, who only arrived a day before their opening match against France due to volcanic ash clouds over South America, looked out of sorts. They were easily beaten 3-0 by a lively French side and, despite beating Jamaica, lost their final group game to Japan.

Argentina's third place in Group B meant a last-16 showdown with Group C winners England, who ran out winners on penalties on a waterlogged pitch in Pachuca. England had looked good in their group games, although they did concede a freak equaliser to Canada when goalkeeper Quillan Roberts scored from a free-kick inside his own half. Liverpool's Raheem Sterling was their star performer and there was no shame in going out to an impressive German side.



Young foe... Samed Yesil celebrates one of his goals during Germany's win over England

Holland had thrashed the Germans 5-2 in the European Final earlier in the year but were stunned to lose 1-0 to Congo in their opening match and could only draw 1-1 with North Korea before losing to Mexico in their final group game.

Of the other nations, debutants Uzbekistan deserve recognition for their run to the quarter-finals. After a nervy opening defeat by New Zealand, the Uzbeks recorded surprise wins over USA and Czech Republic, with 15-year-old Bobir Davlatov, taking a starring role.

They topped Group D, earning a last-16 meeting with Australia, who were thrashed 4-0. The Uzbek run was ended by Uruguay in the quarter-finals but coach Alexey Evstafeev pointed out that most of his players were born in 1994, the same year as Uzbekistan's last big tournament triumph, in the Asian Games in Hiroshima. "I hope that's a sign," Evstafeev said.

John Holmesdale

Overhead sensation...Ivory Coast's Coulibaly scores one of the goals of the tournament during a 3-3 draw with Brazil

WOMENS WORLD CUP
Japan win first world title for Asia

Late show...Japan captain Sawa (far right), who was the tournament's leading scorer, headed home a corner three minutes from the end of extra-time to take the Final to penalties

Japan were the surprise winners of the 2011 Women's World Cup in Germany after beating favourites USA on penalties in the Final.

The Japanese victory, the first by any Asian team in a FIFA competition, was hailed as a beacon of hope for the victims of Japan's tsunami earlier this year.

After his side pulled off one of the shocks of the tournament by beating hosts Germany in the quarter-finals, Japan coach Norio Sasaki had paid tribute to the victims of the tsunami that killed 25,000 in north-east Japan earlier in the year.

"Whether our motivation is influenced by it or not, we want to show the people of the world we are grateful for their support," said Sasaki. "Hopefully our play is also encouragement for the victims of the disaster. We have seen pictures of those affected by the disaster and to see them toil in such adversity gives us strength."

The Japan team demonstrated that spirit in not only overcoming Germany, but also in beating traditional power Sweden in the semi-finals and then – in a thrilling Final that went to spot-kicks – beating USA to claim the title.

It was also Japan's first victory in 25 meetings with the US and was as unexpected as it was exciting.

The USA had gone into the Final full of confidence as they sought to become the first nation to win the competition three times. However, in a dramatic decider in Frankfurt, Japan twice fought back to force the game to penalties and then held their nerve in the shoot-out.

"It was a difficult moment for us because we were so close, but I think Japan, a country which has gone through so much over the past few months, almost needed the victory more than we did," said USA striker Abby Wambach.

"The thought that their success will bring happiness and hope to the Japanese people is a consolation."

After USA had taken the lead in the 69th minute through Alex Morgan, Japan's Aya Miyama equalised in the 81st minute to force extra time. Wambach gave them the lead for a second time in the first period of extra time, but Homare Sawa, Japan's 32-year-old captain, equalised in the 117th minute to take the contest to penalties.

"We ran and ran – we were exhausted but we kept running," said Sawa, who was playing in her fifth World Cup and finished as the tournament's top scorer.

"Not one of the players gave up," coach Sasaki added. "The penalty kicks are always a 50-50 chance."

Japan's goalkeeper Ayumi Kaihori saved the first penalty from Shannon Boxx with a foot and then swatted away the third kick from Tobin Heath. In between, Carli Lloyd shot over the bar.

Japan had entertained the large crowds in Germany throughout the tournament with a tiki-taka style of play similar to Spain, combining neat, short-range passing and heavy pressing from the front.

The Germans, as hosts and holders, were the pre-season favourites but were outplayed by Japan in the quarter-finals. Another European team, France, had looked good until their defeat to USA in the semi-finals.

England lost to France on penalties in the quarter-finals, but took consolation from the fact that they had beaten both finalists: Japan in the group stages and USA in a pre-tournament friendly.

Unfortunately, the early stages were overshadowed by the positive drugs tests for steroids given by five North Korean players. WS

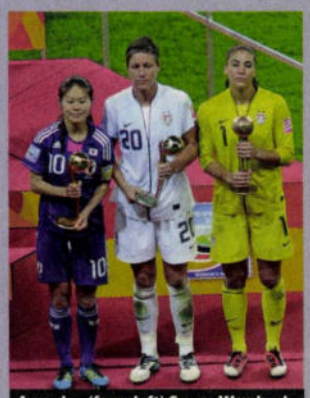
PLAYERS OF THE TOURNAMENT

GOLDEN BALL
HOMARE SAWA (Jap)
SILVER BALL
ABBY WAMBACH (USA)
BRONZE BALL
HOPE SOLO (USA)

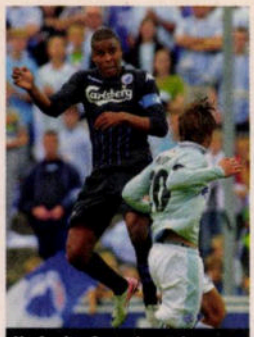
TOP SCORERS
HOMARE SAWA (Jap, 5 goals)
MARTA (Bra, 4 goals)
ABBY WAMBACH (USA, 4 goals)

GOALKEEPER OF THE TOURNAMENT
HOPE SOLO (USA)

BEST YOUNG PLAYER
CAITLIN FOORD (Aus)



Awards...(from left) Sawa, Wambach and Solo


Up for it...Copenhagen's Mathias Jorgensen (left)

DENMARK

Champions make an impressive start

Copenhagen began their pursuit of a fourth consecutive league title with a 2-0 win at SonderjyskEe. Cesar Santin and Dame Ndoye were the scorers.

Also on the opening weekend, Midtjylland suffered a surprise 2-1 defeat at home to Silkeborg. Jakob Poulsen had given the home side the lead, but the visitors replied through Kasper Risgaard and Dennis Flinta.

HUNGARY

Success for new boss

Videoton, led by coach Paulo Sousa for the first time, gained revenge over the side that prevented them from completing the domestic double last season as they beat Kecskemeti 1-0 in the Hungarian Super Cup.

Andre Alves scored the only goal of the game six minutes from time for the champions, who had Zoltan Liptak sent off midway through the second half.

NORTHERN IRELAND

European joy at home

Glentoran were victorious at home in European competition for the first time in 26 years when they beat Macedonian side Renova 2-1 in the first qualifying round of the Europa League.

Goals from Richard Clarke and 17-year-old substitute Martin Murray made it 3-3 on aggregate and took the game to a penalty shoot-out, which the team from Belfast won 3-2.

Club Results

EUROPE

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

1st qualifying round

1st legs - June 28; 2nd legs - July 5/6
FC Santa Coloma (And) v F91 Dudelange (Lux)
0-2, 0-2 (agg 0-4)
Tre Fiori (SMr) v Valletta (Mlt)
0-3, 1-2 (agg 1-5)

EUROPA LEAGUE

1st qualifying round

1st legs - June 30; 2nd legs - July 7
Aalesund (Nor) v Neath (Wal)
4-1, 2-0 (agg 6-1)
Banants (Arm) v Metalurgi Rustavi (Geo)
0-1, 1-1 (agg 1-2)
Banga (Lit) v Qarabag (Aze)
0-4, 0-3 (agg 0-7)
Birkirkara (Mlt) v Vllaznia (Alb)
0-1, 1-1 (agg 1-2)
Buducnost Podgorica (Mne) v Flamurtari (Alb)
1-3, 2-1 (agg 3-4)
Daugava Daugavpils (Lat) v Tromso (Nor)
0-5, 1-2 (agg 1-7)
Dinamo Tbilisi (Geo) v Milsami Orhei (Mol)
2-0, 3-1 (agg 5-1)
Elfsborg (Swe) v Fola Esch (Lux)
4-0, 1-1 (agg 5-1)
Ferencvaros (Hun) v Ulisses (Arm)
3-0, 2-0 (agg 5-0)
Fulham (Eng) v NSI Runavik (Far)
3-0, 0-0 (agg 3-0)
Honka Espoo (Fin) v Nomme Kalju (Est)
0-0, 2-0 (agg 2-0)
IBV Vestmannaeyjar (Ice) v St Patrick's Ath (Rlr)
1-0, 0-2 (agg 1-2)
IF Fuglafjordur (Far) v KR Reykjavik (Ice)
1-3, 1-5 (agg 2-8)
Jagiellonia Bialystok (Pol) v Irtysh Pavlodar (Kaz)
1-0, 0-2 (agg 1-2)
Kaerjeng (Lux) v Hacken (Swe)
1-1, 1-5 (agg 2-6)
Koper (Sln) v Shakhter Karagandy (Kaz)
1-1, 1-2 (agg 2-3)
Olimpik-Suvalan (Aze) v Minsk (Bls)
1-1, 1-2 (agg 2-3)
Rad (Ser) v Tre Penne (SMr)
6-0, 3-1 (agg 9-1)
Renova (Mac) v Glentoran (Nlr)
2-1, 1-2 (agg 3-3, Glentoran 3-2 on pens)
Siroki Brijeg (Bos) v Olimpija Ljubljana (Sln)
0-0, 0-3 (agg 0-3)
Spartak Trnava (Slk) v Zeta (Mne)
3-0, 1-2 (agg 4-2)
The New Saints (Wal) v Cliftonville (Nlr)
1-1, 1-0 (agg 2-1)
Trans Narva (Est) v Rabotnicki (Mac)
1-4, 0-3 (agg 1-7)
UE Santa Coloma (And) v Paks (Hun)
0-1, 0-4 (agg 0-5)
Varazdin (Cro) v Lusitanos (And)
5-1, 1-0 (agg 6-1)

BALTIC LEAGUE

Semi-finals

1st legs - May 3/4; 2nd legs - May 24/25
Skonto Riga (Lat) v Liepajas Metalurgs (Lat)
5-0, 1-0 (agg 6-0)
Siauliai (Lit) v Ventspils (Lat)
0-2, 0-2 (agg 0-4)

Final

June 18 - Ventspils (Olympic Centre)
Ventspils 1 (Shibamura 109)
Skonto Riga 1 (Sabala 100)
Aet. **HT:** 0-0. **90mins:** 0-0. **Att:** 2,000.
Ref: Dunauskas (Lit)
Skonto 6-5 on pens

SETANTA CUP

Semi-finals

1st legs - Apr 4/11; 2nd legs - Apr 18/19
Cliftonville (Nlr) v Dundalk (Rlr)
1-3, 1-2 (agg 2-5)
Sligo Rovers (Rlr) v Shamrock Rovers (Rlr)
0-2, 1-2 (agg 1-4)

Final

May 14 - Dublin (Tallaght)
Dundalk 0
Shamrock Rovers 2 (O'Neill 65, Dennehy 90+3)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 4,789. **Ref:** Kelly

AUSTRIA

July 16: Mattersburg 1 Wiener Neustadt 2; Rapid 2 Admira 0; Ried 1 Sturm 1; Kapfenberger 2 Wacker 3.
July 17: Salzburg 2 Austria 0.

AUSTRIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rapid	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Salzburg	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Wacker	1	1	0	0	3	2	3
W Neustadt	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Ried	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Sturm	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Kapfenberger	1	0	0	1	2	3	0
Mattersburg	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Admira	1	0	0	1	0	2	0
Austria	1	0	0	1	0	2	0

36-round season (9x4); bottom team will be relegated

BELGIUM

League, 1st round

Club Brugge v Westerlo
Genk v Beerschot
Gent v Cercle Brugge
Kortrijk v Lierse
Lokeren v Zulte Waregem
Mechelen v St Truiden
Mons v Standard
OH Leuven v Anderlecht
Weekend of July 30/31

BULGARIA

BULGARIA – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lovech (C)	30	23	6	1	56	13	75
Levski	30	23	3	4	67	24	72
CSKA	30	18	7	5	53	26	61
Lok Sofia	30	16	4	10	47	33	52
Lok Plovdiv	30	14	10	6	54	28	52
Cherno More	30	15	6	9	36	28	51
Beroe	30	13	7	10	33	34	46
Chernomorets	30	9	10	11	19	28	37
Minyor	30	10	6	14	33	45	36
Slavia	30	9	5	16	34	38	32
Montana	30	8	8	14	30	46	32
Kaliakra	30	8	6	16	19	40	30
Pirin (R)*	30	6	9	15	32	39	27
V-Rakovski**	30	6	7	17	26	52	25
Akademik (R)	30	5	5	20	16	51	20
Sliven (R)	30	4	7	19	22	52	19

**Pirin relegated to 3rd level for financial reasons*
***Vidima-Rakovski stayed up after winning rel/prom play-off*

CZECH REPUBLIC

League, 1st round

Bohemians 1905 v Slavia
Ceske Budejovice v Sparta
Dukla v Olomouc
Hradec Kralove v Zizkov
Jablonec v Mlada Boleslav
Ostrava v Teplice
Plzen v Liberec
Slovacko v Pribram
Weekend of July 30/31

DENMARK

July 16: OB 2 Nordsjaelland 0.
July 17: Midtjylland 1 Silkeborg 2; Horsens 3 HB Koge 0; SonderjyskE 0 Copenhagen 2; Brondby 2 AaB 2.
July 18: AGF 2 Lyngby 1.

DENMARK	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Horsens	1	1	0	0	3	0	3
Copenhagen	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
OB	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
AGF	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Silkeborg	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
AaB	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Brondby	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Lyngby	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Midtjylland	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Nordsjaelland	1	0	0	1	0	2	0
SonderjyskE	1	0	0	1	0	2	0
HB Koge	1	0	0	1	0	3	0

33-round season (11x3); bottom 2 will be relegated

ENGLAND

League, 1st round

Blackburn v Wolverhampton
Fulham v Aston Villa
Liverpool v Sunderland
Manchester City v Swansea
Newcastle v Arsenal
Queens Park Rangers v Bolton
Stoke v Chelsea
Tottenham v Everton
West Bromwich v Manchester United
Wigan v Norwich
Weekend of August 13/14

FINLAND

June 22: HJK 6 TPS 0; VPS 1 Haka 1; Mariehamn 1 MyPa 1.
June 23: JJK 2 Honka 2.
June 29: Inter 4 KuPS 4; Jaro 8 RoPS 2; MyPa 0 HJK 1.
June 30: TPS 1 Haka 2.
July 3: RoPS 1 Mariehamn 1; Honka 2 Inter 3; TPS 1 VPS 1.
July 4: Haka 3 Jaro 1; MyPa 2 JJK 1; KuPS 2 HJK 4.
July 8: HJK 4 Inter 2.
July 9: Jaro 1 TPS 1.
July 10: VPS 1 KuPS 1; Honka 1 MyPa 1; Mariehamn 2 Haka 1.
July 11: JJK 3 RoPS 0.
July 15: Haka 0 JJK 2.
July 16: HJK 3 VPS 0.
July 17: RoPS 1 Honka 2; KuPS 1 Jaro 1; TPS 2 Mariehamn 0.
July 18: Inter 5 MyPa 2.

FINLAND	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
HJK	16	14	0	2	46	12	42
Inter	15	10	2	3	41	22	32
JJK	15	9	3	3	27	19	30
TPS	16	7	4	5	22	23	25
Mariehamn	15	6	3	6	19	17	21
Honka	15	5	5	5	19	20	20
Haka	16	5	3	8	17	32	18
KuPS	15	3	6	6	17	24	15
MyPa	16	4	3	9	17	25	15
Jaro	15	3	4	8	23	29	13
VPS	15	2	6	7	10	21	12
RoPS	15	2	5	8	19	33	11

33-round season (11x3); bottom team will be relegated

FRANCE

League, 1st round

Ajaccio v Toulouse
Bordeaux v Saint-Etienne
Brest v Evian
Caen v Valenciennes
Dijon v Rennes
Marseille v Sochaux
Montpellier v Auxerre
Nancy v Lille
Nice v Lyon
Paris Saint-Germain v Lorient
Weekend of August 6/7

GERMANY

League, 1st round

Augsburg v Freiburg
Bayern Munich v Monchengladbach
Borussia Dortmund v Hamburg
Hanover v 1899 Hoffenheim
Hertha v Nuremberg
Cologne v Wolfsburg
Mainz v Bayer Leverkusen
Stuttgart v Schalke
Werder Bremen v Kaiserslautern
Weekend of August 6/7

ROMANIA

Super Cup triumph

Laurentiu Bus scored the only goal of the game as reigning league champions Otelul beat Cup holders Steaua Bucharest 1-0 in the Romanian Super Cup ahead of the start of the new domestic season.

Former league champions Unirea Urziceni have been banned from all domestic competition after their owner, Dumitru Bucsaru, failed to apply for a licence.

Urziceni, who won the title in 2009, were relegated from the top flight last season.

WALES

Saints go marching on

The New Saints beat Cliftonville 1-0 in Northern Ireland to record a first-ever away win in Europe and reach the second qualifying round of the Europa League as Phil Baker's fourth-minute goal gave them a 2-1 victory on aggregate.

"It was a fantastic achievement," said TNS manager Mike Davies.

Neath, who were making their European debut, lost 6-1 on aggregate to Aalesund of Norway.

Saint..match winner Baker

CANADA

Trio for Toronto

Toronto won their third consecutive Canadian Championship, coming from behind to beat Vancouver Whitecaps 2-1 in the second leg of the Final to win 3-2 on aggregate.

The first attempt to play the second leg was abandoned due to severe

CLUB FOOTBALL

HOLLAND

League, 1st round

AZ v PSV
De Graafschap v Ajax
Den Haag v Vitesse
Excelsior v Feyenoord
Heerenveen v NEC
NAC v Twente
RKC v Heracles
Roda JC v Groningen
VVV v Utrecht
Weekend of August 6/7

NORWAY

June 25: Aalesund 1 Lillestrom 0.
June 26: Sogndal 0 Fredrikstad 1; Odd Grenland 1 Molde 0; Tromso 3 Stabaek 3; Start 0 Valerenga 2; Stromsgodset 3 Haugesund 1; Viking 0 Rosenborg 0.
June 27: Sarpsborg 3 Brann 5.
June 29: Fredrikstad 1 Haugesund 0; Lillestrom 2 Start 1; Valerenga 1 Molde 2.
June 30: Brann 2 Odd Grenland 0; Viking 2 Sarpsborg 2.
July 2: Valerenga 2 Stromsgodset 2.
July 3: Rosenborg 4 Sarpsborg 0; Haugesund 2 Odd Grenland 1; Start 1 Sogndal 1; Brann 2 Stabaek 1; Lillestrom 2 Viking 1; Molde 5 Aalesund 2.
July 4: Fredrikstad 0 Tromso 2.
July 9: Rosenborg 2 Stromsgodset 0.
July 10: Valerenga 2 Tromso 0.
July 15: Odd Grenland 1 Lillestrom 3.
July 17: Sogndal 1 Sarpsborg 0; Molde 3 Haugesund 1; Stromsgodset 3 Start 0; Viking 1 Aalesund 0; Stabaek 2 Rosenborg 1; Tromso 4 Valerenga 1.
July 18: Fredrikstad 4 Brann 2.

NORWAY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Molde	16	10	2	4	33	24	32
Tromso	15	8	5	2	29	16	29
Stromsgodset	15	8	2	5	25	21	26
Brann	16	8	2	6	28	27	26
Lillestrom	16	7	4	5	35	25	25
Fredrikstad	16	7	2	7	20	19	23
Stabaek	15	7	2	6	27	30	23
Aalesund	15	7	2	6	19	22	23
Rosenborg	15	6	4	5	27	19	22
Valerenga	15	6	3	6	18	18	21
Haugesund	16	6	2	8	25	29	20
Viking	16	4	5	7	13	21	17
Odd Grenland	15	4	4	7	19	24	16
Sarpsborg	16	4	4	8	23	32	16
Sogndal	15	4	3	8	10	16	15
Start	16	4	2	10	23	31	14

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated

PORTUGAL

League, 1st round

Feirense v Nacional
Gil Vicente v Benfica
Guimaraes v Porto
Maritimo v Beira Mar
Rio Ave v Braga
Setubal v Pacos Ferreira
Sporting v Olhanense
Uniao Leiria v Academica
Weekend of August 13/14

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

June 24: Sligo 2 Shamrock 0; Bohemians 2 Drogheda 0; Dundalk 6 Galway 1; St Patrick's 1 Bray 0; UCD 2 Derry 2.
June 28: Bray 1 Dundalk 5.
July 1: Bray 0 Sligo 3; Dundalk 1 Bohemians 3; Galway 3 UCD 4; Drogheda 0 Derry 3.
July 3: Shamrock 1 St Patrick's 0.
July 8: Derry 1 Shamrock 0; Bohemians 2 Galway 0; UCD 1 Bray 2.
July 9: Sligo 2 Drogheda 0.
July 10: St Patrick's 2 Dundalk 2.
July 15: Bray 1 Derry 2; Dundalk 2 UCD 0; Galway 0 Sligo 8; Drogheda 0 Shamrock 1.

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sligo	23	14	4	5	42	10	46
Shamrock	23	13	6	4	36	13	45
Derry	23	12	8	3	44	16	44
St Patrick's	22	12	6	4	37	21	42
Bohemians	22	11	5	6	23	15	38
Dundalk	23	10	6	7	40	28	36
Bray	23	10	4	9	26	29	34
UCD	23	5	3	15	22	51	18
Drogheda	23	3	2	18	14	45	11
Galway	23	1	2	20	12	68	5

36-round season (9x4); bottom team will enter rel/prom play-off

RUSSIA

Regular season

June 22: Tom 1 Rostov 1; Amkar 1 Spartak Nalchik 0; Rubin 2 Volga 0; Spartak Moscow 0 Dynamo 2; Krylia Sovetov 0 Anzhi 3; CSKA 3 Lokomotiv 1; Krasnodar 0 Terek 2; Zenit 1 Kuban 0.
June 26: Tom 0 Volga 3; Amkar 0 CSKA 2; Rubin 0 Kuban 2; Krylia Sovetov 0 Spartak Nalchik 2; Zenit 0 Terek 0; Krasnodar 2 Anzhi 2; Spartak Moscow 3 Rostov 2; Dynamo 4 Lokomotiv 1.

RUSSIA – REGULAR

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
CSKA	15	10	4	1	31	10	34
Zenit	16	8	6	2	26	12	30
Dynamo	16	8	5	3	25	18	29
Rubin	16	7	6	3	23	13	27
Anzhi	16	7	6	3	17	13	27
Kuban	16	7	3	6	17	14	24
Spartak M	16	7	3	6	17	19	24
Lokomotiv	16	6	4	6	24	22	22
Krasnodar	16	5	6	5	18	21	21
Terek	16	5	4	7	13	17	19
Amkar	16	5	4	7	12	19	19
Volga	15	5	1	9	17	17	16
Tom	16	3	7	6	15	26	16
Rostov	16	3	4	9	19	28	13
Spartak N	16	2	6	8	13	22	12
Krylia Sovetov	16	2	5	9	8	24	11

30-round regular season (15x2); top 8 will form championship group; bottom 8 will form relegation group (the bottom 2 of that group will go down, 3rd & 4th bottom of that group will enter rel/prom play-offs)

SLOVAKIA

July 15: Slovan 3 Trencin 1.
July 16: Senica 3 Tatran 0; Dukla 1 Nitra 2; Zlate Moravce 1 Ruzomberok 0.
July 17: Zilina 1 Kosice 1; Spartak 2 DAC 1.

SLOVAKIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Senica	1	1	0	0	3	0	3
Slovan	1	1	0	0	3	1	3
Nitra	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Spartak	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Zlate Moravce	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Kosice	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Zilina	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
DAC	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Dukla	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Ruzomberok	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Trencin	1	0	0	1	1	3	0
Tatran	1	0	0	1	0	3	0

33-round season (11x3); bottom team will be relegated

SPAIN

League, 1st round

Betis v Sevilla
Espanyol v Granada
Levante v Zaragoza
Malaga v Barcelona
Osasuna v Valencia
Racing Santander v Getafe
Rayo Vallecano v Mallorca
Real Madrid v Athletic Bilbao
Real Sociedad v Atletico Madrid
Villarreal v Sporting Gijon
Weekend of August 20/21

SWEDEN

June 22: Gothenburg 1 Elfsborg 1; AIK 3 Norrkoping 0.
June 23: Orebro 1 Djurgarden 2; Syrianska 3 Mjallby 1; Malmo 0 Gefle 0; Kalmar 2 GAIS 1; Helsingborg 7 Trelleborg 3.
June 26: Mjallby 2 Orebro 1; GAIS 2 Malmo 0; Trelleborg 1 AIK 2; Djurgarden 1 Hacken 0; Gefle 1 Gothenburg 0.
June 27: Elfsborg 2 Syrianska 1; Halmstad 1 Helsingborg 2; Norrkoping 1 Kalmar 2.
July 2: Kalmar 3 Trelleborg 2; Syrianska 1 Gothenburg 2; GAIS 2 Gefle 3.
July 3: Malmo 2 Norrkoping 1; Orebro 0 Elfsborg 3; Halmstad 1 AIK 3; Hacken 6 Mjallby 0.
July 4: Djurgarden 1 Helsingborg 1.
July 9: Gefle 1 GAIS 3; Norrkoping 0 Malmo 0; Trelleborg 3 Kalmar 2.
July 10: Gothenburg 3 Syrianska 0; Mjallby 1 Hacken 2; Elfsborg 3 Orebro 0.
July 11: AIK 4 Halmstad 0; Helsingborg 3 Djurgarden 0.
July 16: Djurgarden 1 Mjallby 0; Norrkoping 2 Syrianska 1.
July 17: Gefle 0 AIK 3; GAIS 4 Orebro 1; Halmstad 1 Elfsborg 2.
July 18: Kalmar 1 Helsingborg 2; Trelleborg 2 Gothenburg 0.

SWEDEN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Helsingborg	17	11	5	1	31	12	38
Elfsborg	17	11	2	4	31	16	35
AIK	17	10	2	5	28	16	32
GAIS	17	9	2	6	28	19	29
Kalmar	17	9	2	6	22	19	29
Gefle	17	7	6	4	17	17	27
Hacken	16	7	4	5	32	18	25
Malmo	16	7	4	5	16	18	25
Gothenburg	17	7	3	7	21	22	24
Djurgarden	17	6	3	8	20	21	21
Orebro	17	6	2	9	21	27	20
Trelleborg	17	6	2	9	28	38	20
Norrkoping	17	5	4	8	18	26	19
Syrianska	17	4	3	10	15	24	15
Mjallby	17	4	2	11	12	27	14
Halmstad	17	1	4	12	11	31	7

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated; 3rd bottom will enter rel/prom play-off

SWITZERLAND

July 16: Sion 1 Zurich 0; Young Boys 1 Basle 1.
July 17: Xamax 0 Lucerne 3; Servette 1 Thun 2.

SWITZERLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lucerne	1	1	0	0	3	0	3
Thun	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Sion	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Basle	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Young Boys	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Grasshopper	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lausanne	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Servette	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Zurich	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Xamax	1	0	0	1	0	3	0

36-round season (9x4); bottom team will be relegated; 2nd bottom will enter rel/prom play-off

UKRAINE

July 8: Vorskla 0 Oleksandria 1.
July 9: Kryvbas 1 Volyn 0; Illichivets 1 Karpaty 0; Tavriya 3 Zorya 1.
July 10: Shakhtar 4 Obolon 0; Dynamo 1 Metalist 1; Chornomorets 0 Metalurh 1.
July 11: Arsenal 3 Dnipro 3.
July 15: Kryvbas 0 Dnipro 2.
July 16: Metalist 3 Zorya 2; Oleksandria 1 Dynamo 3; Metalurh 0 Shakhtar 2; Volyn 2 Tavriya 2.
July 17: Karpaty 1 Chornomorets 1; Obolon 0 Vorskla 1; Arsenal 0 Illichivets 0.

UKRAINE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Shakhtar	2	2	0	0	6	0	6
Dnipro	2	1	1	0	5	3	4
Tavriya	2	1	1	0	5	3	4
Dynamo	2	1	1	0	4	2	4
Metalist	2	1	1	0	4	3	4
Illichivets	2	1	1	0	1	0	4
Vorskla	2	1	0	1	1	1	3
Oleksandria	2	1	0	1	2	3	3
Kryvbas	2	1	0	1	1	2	3
Metalurh	2	1	0	1	1	2	3
Arsenal	2	0	2	0	3	3	2
Volyn	2	0	1	1	2	3	1
Chornomorets	2	0	1	1	1	2	1
Karpaty	2	0	1	1	1	2	1
Zorya	2	0	0	2	3	6	0
Obolon	2	0	0	2	0	5	0

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated

weather conditions with Vancouver leading 1-0, but Brazilian forward Camilo put them ahead again in the rearranged game. Toronto hit back with second-half goals from Joao Plata and Mikael Yourassowsky.

USA

Kickers shock Kansas

Richmond Kickers, who play in the USL Pro, have reached the semi-finals of the US Open Cup.

Shaka Bangura and David Bulow were the scorers as the third division side beat Sporting Kansas City 2-0 to record their second victory over an MLS team in this season's competition and set up a last-four showdown with Chicago Fire.

Dallas face Seattle Sounders in the other semi.

Winner...Toronto's Maicon Santos

CAMEROON

Holders take title

Defending champions Coton Sport retained the Cameroon league title following a 2-1 victory over Unisport Bafang.

Astres de Douala finished second, despite losing 1-0 to Tiko United, thanks to a 1-1 draw between Union Douala and Canon Yaounde.

ETHIOPIA

Coffee champions

Ethiopian Coffee claimed the Ethiopian Premier League title for the first time since 1997, beating Muger Cement 2-0 on the final day of the season to finish a point ahead of Saint George.

They will now represent the country in next year's CAF Champions League.

SOUTH AMERICA

RECOPA

Independiente (Arg) v Internacional (Bra)
1st leg - Aug 10; 2nd leg - Aug 24
(2010 Libertadores Cup winners, Internacional v 2010 Sudamericana Cup winners, Independiente)

SUDAMERICANA CUP

1st round draw

Bella Vista (Uru) v Universidad Catolica (Chl) (1)
Cesar Vallejo (Per) v Indep Santa Fe (Col) (2)
Deportivo Quito (Ecu) v Anzoategui (Ven) (3)
La Equidad (Col) v Juan Aurich (Per) (4)
Olimpia (Par) v The Strongest (Bol) (5)
San Jose (Bol) v Nacional (Par) (6)
Yaracuyanos (Ven) v LDU Quito (Ecu) (7)
3rd Chilean reps v Fenix (Uru) (8)
1st legs - Aug 2-18; 2nd legs - Aug 11-25

2nd round draw

Argentinos Juniors (Arg) v Velez Sarsfield (Arg)
Arsenal (Arg) v Estudiantes (Arg)
Atletico Mineiro (Bra) v Botafogo (Bra)
Ceara (Bra) v Sao Paulo (Bra)
Flamengo (Bra) v Atletico Paranaense (Bra)
Lanus (Arg) v Godoy Cruz (Arg)
Vasco da Gama (Bra) v Palmeiras (Bra)
Game 1 winners v Deportes Iquique (Chl)
Game 2 winners v Deportivo Cali (Col)
Game 3 winners v Universitario (Per)
Game 4 winners v Libertad (Par)
Game 5 winners v Emelec (Ecu)
Game 6 winners v Aurora (Bol)
Game 7 winners v Trujillanos (Ven)
Game 8 winners v Nacional (Uru)
1st legs - Aug 10-15; 2nd legs - Aug 23-Sep 21

3rd round

Direct entrant
Independiente (Arg; holders)

ARGENTINA

ARGENTINA – CLAUSURA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Velez	19	12	3	4	36	17	39
Lanus	19	10	5	4	29	16	35
Godoy Cruz	19	10	4	5	33	28	34
Olimpo	19	8	6	5	28	23	30
Argentinos	19	7	9	3	16	11	30
Independiente	19	7	8	4	30	20	29
Boca Juniors	19	7	7	5	24	22	28
Banfield	19	7	6	6	24	24	27
River Plate (R)*	19	6	8	5	15	15	26
Arsenal	19	6	7	6	25	22	25
Tigre	19	6	7	6	25	26	25
All Boys	19	7	4	8	14	19	25
Estudiantes	19	6	6	7	18	19	24
San Lorenzo	19	5	8	6	19	17	23
Racing Club	19	7	2	10	25	26	23
Colon	19	6	3	10	20	27	21
Quilmes (R)*	19	5	5	9	24	27	20
Gimnasia (R)*	19	3	9	7	19	25	18
Newell's	19	4	4	11	16	32	16
Huracan (R)*	19	3	5	11	18	42	14

**Relegation determined by average points over the 3 most recent full seasons. Quilmes had the lowest average so were relegated automatically. Huracan and Gimnasia La Plata had the equal second lowest average, so played off, with the loser, Huracan, also going down. Gimnasia La Plata went into a rel/prom play-off, which they lost, to also go down. River Plate, who had the third lowest average points, lost their rel/prom play-off, so became the fourth team to be relegated*

BRAZIL

June 25: Paranaense 0 Bahia 2; Cruzeiro 2 Coritiba 1; Flamengo 4 Atletico Mineiro 1.
June 26: Ceara 2 Palmeiras 0; Avai 0 Fluminense 1; Botafogo 2 Gremio 1; Corinthians 5 Sao Paulo 0; Goianiense 0 Vasco da Gama 1; Internacional 4 Figueirense 1.
June 29: Vasco da Gama 0 Cruzeiro 3; Gremio 2 Avai 2; Sao Paulo 0 Botafogo 2; Figueirense 2 Santos 1; Bahia 0 Corinthians 1; America 2 Flamengo 3.
June 30: Palmeiras 2 Goianiense 0; Coritiba 3 Ceara 1; Fluminense 3 Paranaense 1; Atletico Mineiro 0 Internacional 4.
July 2: Santos 1 America 0.
July 6: Cruzeiro 2 Gremio 0; Avai 2 Bahia 2; Ceara 3 Atletico Mineiro 0; Flamengo 1 Sao Paulo 0; Corinthians 2 Vasco da Gama 1; Internacional 1 Paranaense 0.
July 7: Botafogo 1 Goianiense 1; Coritiba 3 Figueirense 0; America 1 Palmeiras 1.
July 9: Sao Paulo 2 Cruzeiro 1; Paranaense 0 Avai 0; Vasco da Gama 2 Internacional 0.
July 10: Fluminense 0 Flamengo 1; Gremio 2 Coritiba 0; Goianiense 0 Corinthians 1; Bahia 1 Botafogo 1; Atletico Mineiro 2 America 0; Figueirense 1 Ceara 1; Palmeiras 3 Santos 0.
July 14: Corinthians 1 Internacional 0.
July 16: Vasco da Gama 2 Paranaense 1; Coritiba 3 Fluminense 1; Goianiense 0 Avai 1; Santos 2 Atletico Mineiro 1.
July 17: Ceara 4 America 0; Internacional 0 Sao Paulo 3; Cruzeiro 2 Bahia 1.

BRAZIL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Corinthians	9	8	1	0	17	4	25
Sao Paulo	10	7	0	3	14	10	21
Flamengo	9	5	4	0	18	8	19
Palmeiras	9	5	3	1	16	6	18
Vasco	10	5	2	3	15	14	17
Botafogo	9	4	4	1	12	7	16
Cruzeiro	10	4	3	3	14	10	15
Internacional	11	4	3	4	17	14	15
Ceara	10	4	2	4	16	15	14
Figueirense	9	4	2	3	10	11	14
Coritiba	10	4	1	5	18	14	13
Fluminense	9	4	0	5	8	11	12
Gremio	9	3	2	4	11	12	11
Santos	8	3	2	3	9	10	11
At Mineiro	10	3	2	5	13	18	11
Bahia	10	2	4	4	12	14	10
Goianiense	10	2	2	6	8	12	8
Avai	10	1	4	5	9	22	7
America	10	1	3	6	10	22	6
Paranaense	10	0	2	8	3	16	2

38-round season (19x2); bottom 4 will be relegated

BRAZILIAN CUP

Final, 1st leg
June 1
Vasco da Gama 1 (Alecsandro 51)
Coritiba 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 17,922. **Ref:** Oliveira

Final, 2nd leg
June 8
Coritiba 3 (Bill 29, Davi 44, Willian 66)
Vasco da Gama 2 (Alecsandro 12, Eder Luis 57)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 31,516. **Ref:** Fagundes
Agg 3-3. Vasco on away goals

PERU

PERU – REGULAR

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Alianza Lima	15	9	4	2	23	10	31
Cienciano	15	9	2	4	24	18	29
Juan Aurich	15	7	7	1	26	11	28
Universitario	15	6	7	2	15	6	25
Leon	15	7	1	7	19	16	22
Huancayo	14	6	3	5	22	13	21
Inti Gas	15	6	3	6	20	23	21
Cesar Vallejo	15	5	5	5	16	17	20
Cobresol	15	4	8	3	12	13	20
San Martin	15	4	5	6	21	18	17
Comercio	15	4	4	7	19	22	16
CNI	15	3	7	5	15	21	16
Sport Boys	14	4	4	6	11	22	16
Cristal	15	3	5	7	11	19	14
Melgar	15	3	4	8	11	23	13
Al Atletico	15	4	1	10	10	23	13

Standings on July 19
30-round regular season; top 2 will then meet in play-off games to decide the champions; bottom 2 in the regular season will be relegated

CONCACAF

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Preliminary round draw

Alianza (ESv) v Dallas (USA)
Herediano (CR) v Alpha United (Guy)
Isidro Metapan (ESv) v Puerto Rico Islanders (PR)
Monarcas Morelia (Mex) v Tempete (Hai)
Motagua (Hnd) v Municipal (Gtm)
San Francisco (Pan) v Seattle Sounders (USA)
Santos Laguna (Mex) v Olimpia (Hnd)
Toronto (Can) v Real Esteli (Nca)
1st legs - July 26-28; 2nd legs - Aug 2-4

Winners qualify for group stage

Group stage

Direct entrants
Alajuelense (CR)
Colorado Rapids (USA)
Comunicaciones (Gtm)
Los Angeles Galaxy (USA)
Monterrey (Mex; holders)
Pumas UNAM (Mex)
Real Espana (Hnd)
Tauro (Pan)

CFU CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP

(Caribbean Football Union)

Final

May 27 - Providence, Guyana
Puerto Rico Islanders (PR) 3 (Needham 34, Fana 100, 113)
Tempete (Hai) 1 (Charles 42)
Aet. **HT:** 1-1. **90mins:** 1-1. **Ref:** Taylor (Bds)
Sent off: Villaroel (Puerto Rico Islanders) 40min; Romondt (Tempete) 68min

CANADA

Championship

Semi-finals
1st legs - April 28; 2nd legs - May 5
Edmonton v Toronto 0-3, 0-1 (agg 0-4)
Montreal v Vancouver 0-1, 1-1 (agg 1-2)

Final, 1st leg
May 18
Vancouver 1 (Hassli 64)
Toronto 1 (Maicon Santos 73)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 15,474. **Ref:** Petrescu

Final, 2nd leg
July 1
Toronto 2 (Plata pen 51, Yourassowsky 61)
Vancouver 1 (Camilo 21)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 18,212. **Ref:** Gantar
Toronto 3-2 on agg

COSTA RICA

Clausura

Final, 1st leg
May 8
San Carlos 0
Alajuelense 1 (Salvatierra 81)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Poveda
Sent off: Oviedo (Alajuelense) 3min

Final, 2nd leg
May 14
Alajuelense 1 (Sancho 81)
San Carlos 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Cruz
Alajuelense 2-0 on agg

HONDURAS

Clausura

Final, 1st leg
May 8
Motagua 2 (Guevara 43, Bengtson 65)
Olimpia 2 (Douglas Caetano 10, Bruschi 73)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 18,256. **Ref:** Castro

Final, 2nd leg
May 15
Olimpia 1 (De Souza 29)
Motagua 3 (Bengtson 16, pen 90, Guevara 46)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 23,326. **Ref:** Castro
Motagua 5-3 on agg

JAMAICA

Teams carried forward full record from 33-round regular season

JAMAICA – CHAMPIONSHIP GROUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tivoli Gdns (C)	38	20	12	6	52	27	72
Boys Town	38	19	11	8	39	28	68
Harbour View	38	17	10	11	43	28	61
Waterhouse	38	14	9	15	38	35	51
Portmore Utd	38	12	12	14	31	34	48
Village Utd	38	12	11	15	43	49	47

JAMAICA – RELEGATION GROUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Reno	38	13	11	14	39	37	50
Sporting Cntrl	38	11	14	13	39	36	47
Arnett Gdns	38	11	14	13	38	36	47
Humble Lions	38	12	10	16	35	32	46
St George's (R)	38	13	7	18	29	41	46
Benfica (R)	38	10	7	21	34	77	37

MALI

Closing in on rivals

Stade Malien retained their league title, winning the national championship for a 17th time – four short of arch-rivals Djoliba who finished second this season.

SIERRA LEONE

Bangura on target

A goal from defender Mohamed L Bangura gave Ports Authority a 1-0 victory over Central Parade in Freetown and secured the club's third league title.

TANZANIA

Asamoah's winner

Substitute Kenneth Asamoah gave Young Africans a 1-0 win over arch-rivals Simba in the Final of the CECAFA Club Cup at the National Stadium, Dar Es Salaam. This gave Young African's a fourth win in the 37-year-old competition for the 11 nations making up the Council for East and Central African Football Association.

Champions once again...Esperance celebrate another league title

TUNISIA

Third win in a row

Esperance came from behind to beat CS

PANAMA

Clausura

Final

May 14 - Panama City (Rommel Fernandez)
Chorrillo 2 (Rojas 22, Mitre 40)
San Francisco 3 (De Avila 11, Brown pen 84, 91)
Aet. **HT:** 2-1. **90mins:** 2-2. **Ref:** Moreno
Sent off: Algandona (San Francisco) 20min

UNITED STATES

Regular season

June 22: Philadelphia 0 Kansas City 0; Chicago 0 Salt Lake 0.
June 23: Seattle 4 New York 2.
June 25: DC United 2 Houston 2; Philadelphia 3 Chivas 2; Kansas City 2 Vancouver 1; Dallas 4 Portland 0; Salt Lake 3 Toronto 1; San Jose 0 Los Angeles 0.
June 26: Chicago 1 New York 1; Seattle 2 New England 1; Columbus 4 Colorado 1.
June 29: Toronto 1 Vancouver 0.
July 2: DC United 2 Philadelphia 2; Dallas 2 Columbus 0; Chivas 1 Chicago 1; San Jose 2 New York 2; Portland 1 Kansas City 2.
July 3: Colorado 0 Houston 0.
July 4: Salt Lake 3 New England 3; Los Angeles 0 Seattle 0.
July 6: New York 5 Toronto 0; Kansas City 1 Colorado 1; Vancouver 0 Columbus 1; Chivas 2 San Jose 0.
July 9: Kansas City 1 Chivas 1; New York 0 DC United 1; Houston 2 Toronto 0; Colorado 2 Vancouver 1; Salt Lake 2 Dallas 0; San Jose 0 Philadelphia 0; Los Angeles 2 Chicago 1.
July 10: Portland 2 Seattle 3.
July 16: Seattle 4 Colorado 3; Columbus 0 San Jose 0; Chicago 0 Portland 1; Houston 1 Kansas City 1; Dallas 0 DC United 0; Chivas 0 New York 0.
July 17: New England 0 Philadelphia 3.

USA – REGULAR – EASTERN CONFERENCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Philadelphia	19	8	7	4	24	16	31
New York	21	6	11	4	34	24	29
Columbus	19	7	7	5	21	19	28
Houston	20	5	9	6	24	23	24
Kansas City	19	5	8	6	24	25	23
DC United	18	5	8	5	24	29	23
Chicago	20	2	12	6	20	25	18
Toronto	21	3	9	9	17	36	18
New England	19	3	7	9	16	27	16

USA – REGULAR – WESTERN CONFERENCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Los Angeles	21	10	9	2	27	16	39
Seattle	22	10	8	4	32	23	38
Dallas	20	10	5	5	26	19	35
Salt Lake	17	8	6	3	23	12	30
Colorado	21	6	9	6	25	27	27
Chivas	20	5	8	7	24	23	23
San Jose	19	5	8	6	22	21	23
Portland	18	6	3	9	22	31	21
Vancouver	20	2	8	10	19	28	14

34-round regular season (17x2); top 3 in each conference will enter championship play-offs automatically; the other 4 teams with most points, regardless of conference, will meet in 2 head-to-head ties, the winners of which will also enter championship play-offs; no relegation from this league

AFRICA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group A

July 16: Raja Casablanca (Mor) 0 Cotonsport (Cam) 0.
July 17: Enyimba (Nga) 2 Al Hilal (Sud) 2.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Hilal	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Enyimba	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Cotonsport	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Raja	1	0	1	0	0	0	1

Group B

July 16: Mouloudia (Alg) 1 Esperance (Tun) 1.
July 17: Al Ahly (Egy) 3 Wydad Casablanca (Mor) 3.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Ahly	1	0	1	0	3	3	1
Wydad	1	0	1	0	3	3	1
Esperance	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Mouloudia	1	0	1	0	1	1	1

Remaining matchdays:
July 29/30, Aug 12-14, Aug 26-28, Sep 9-11, Sep 16-18

Top 2 in both groups qualify for semi-finals

CONFEDERATION CUP

Group A

July 16: Kaduna United (Nga) 1 InterClube (Ang) 1.
July 17: ASEC Abidjan (IvC) 1 Club Africain (Tun) 1.

CONFEDERATION CUP – GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
ASEC Abidjan	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Club Africain	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
InterClube	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Kaduna Utd	1	0	1	0	1	1	1

Group B

July 16: Maghreb Fes (Mor) 1 JS Kabylie (Alg) 0; Sunshine Stars (Nga) 2 Motema Pembe (DRC) 0.

CONFEDERATION CUP – GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sunshine Stars	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Maghreb Fes	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
JS Kabylie	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Motema Pembe	1	0	0	1	0	2	0

Remaining matchdays:
July 29-31, Aug 12/13, Aug 27/28, Sep 10/11, Sep 17/18

Top 2 in both groups qualify for semi-finals

ALGERIA

ALGERIA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
ASO Chlef (C)	30	19	6	5	51	20	63
JSM Bejaia	30	14	8	8	47	32	50
ES Setif	30	12	11	7	43	31	47
El Harrach	30	12	10	8	36	31	46
CR Belouizdad	30	12	9	9	33	26	45
MC Saida	30	11	9	10	33	35	42
MC Oran	30	11	8	11	26	27	41
AS Khroub	30	10	9	11	30	36	39
USM Alger	30	9	11	10	32	28	38
MC Alger	30	8	13	9	30	28	37
WA Tlemcen	30	10	7	13	35	36	37
JS Kabylie	30	10	7	13	26	37	37
MC El Eulma	30	9	9	12	32	40	36
Annaba (R)	30	10	6	14	23	34	36
USM Blida (R)	30	7	8	15	16	30	29
B B Arreridj (R)	30	8	5	17	21	43	29

EGYPT

EGYPT – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Ahly (C)	30	16	13	1	47	27	61
Zamalek	30	15	11	4	49	32	56
Ismaili	30	14	7	9	48	33	49
Al Shorta	30	12	11	7	31	23	47
ENPPI	30	13	8	9	37	30	47
ML Makasa	30	10	15	5	41	28	45
Al Masry	30	10	13	7	28	22	43
Haras Hedood	30	11	6	13	40	39	39
Al Jaish	30	8	12	10	25	31	36
Petrojet	30	9	8	13	31	38	35
Al Gouna	30	8	10	12	26	33	34
Wadi Degla	30	9	6	15	39	49	33
Entag Harby	30	7	12	11	33	44	33
Al Ittihad (R)	30	7	9	14	36	51	30
Smouha (R)	30	6	10	14	33	45	28
Mokawloon (R)	30	5	9	16	27	46	24

GHANA

GHANA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Berekum C (C)	30	18	3	9	33	26	57
AshantiGold	30	13	8	9	24	14	47
Asante Kotoko	30	13	7	10	36	27	46
Medeama	30	12	10	8	35	31	46
Aduana	30	12	9	9	20	18	45
Hearts of Oak	30	13	4	13	26	22	43
Edubiase	30	11	10	9	33	32	43
Liberty Pros	30	12	7	11	31	29	43
Dwarfs	30	11	8	11	30	24	41
Heart of Lions	30	10	11	9	22	21	41
Berekum A	30	11	8	11	30	34	41
All Stars	30	10	9	11	29	29	39
Mighty Jets	30	11	4	15	24	30	37
King Faisal (R)	30	10	6	14	26	32	36
RTU (R)	30	9	6	15	24	26	33
BA Stars* (R)	30	7	4	19	16	44	22

**3pts deducted*

MOROCCO

MOROCCO – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Raja (C)	30	18	6	6	45	23	60
Maghreb	30	14	11	5	34	23	53
Wydad C	30	13	12	5	31	18	51
Olympique K	30	14	8	8	31	20	50
Olympique S	30	12	13	5	31	25	49
FAR	30	10	10	10	28	27	40
FUS	30	8	14	8	22	21	38
Moghreb	30	8	12	10	26	28	36
Hassania	30	8	12	10	22	24	36
Difaa	30	7	14	9	25	25	35
JSM	30	8	10	12	24	35	34
Chabab H	30	6	15	9	21	24	33
KAC	30	6	14	10	16	24	32
Wydad Fes	30	6	13	11	21	30	31
Kawkab (R)	30	4	16	10	19	25	28
Kasba Tadla (R)	30	4	8	18	17	41	20

SOUTH AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Orlando P (C)	30	17	9	4	41	23	60
Ajax CT	30	18	6	6	50	36	60
Kaizer Chiefs	30	17	8	5	45	23	59
Mamelodi S	30	18	4	8	52	28	58
Bloemfontein	30	14	10	6	37	23	52
Wits	30	10	10	10	47	39	40
SuperSport	30	11	7	12	32	38	40
Santos	30	8	13	9	37	43	37
Free State	30	7	14	9	28	32	35
Platinum Stars	30	6	15	9	34	37	33
Golden Arrows	30	9	6	15	44	49	33
Maritzburg	30	8	9	13	32	46	33
Moroka S	30	8	8	14	26	40	32
AmaZulu	30	5	15	10	43	45	30
Vasco (R)*	30	7	9	14	35	47	30
Mp'langa (R)	30	4	3	23	19	53	15

**Vasco da Gama relegated after losing rel/prom play-off*

TUNISIA

TUNISIA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Esperance (C)	26	20	4	2	50	18	64
Etoile Sahel	26	19	2	5	49	24	59
CS Sfaxien	26	12	8	6	32	23	44
Club Africain	26	8	11	7	32	27	35
Bizertin	26	10	5	11	23	29	35
Hammam-Lif	26	9	7	10	23	31	34
Gafsa	26	8	8	10	28	34	32
Kairouanaise	26	8	7	11	28	29	31
Stade Tunisien	26	7	10	9	25	31	31
Marsa	26	7	9	10	27	33	30
Olympique	26	6	11	9	25	29	29
Zarzis	26	6	9	11	22	24	27
Gabes (R)	26	6	6	14	19	32	24
Ham-S'sse (R)	26	5	5	16	19	38	20

Hammam-Lif 3-1 and win the league title. Goals from Dramane Traore (two) and Youssef Msekni gave the club a 23rd championship and their third in a row.

Runners-up Etoile du Sahel – for whom Ahmed Akaichi was the league's top scorer with 14 goals – will join Esperance in next year's CAF Champions League, while Sfaxien will enter the CAF Confederation Cup.

NEPAL

Goals settle it

Despite losing 1-0 to Manang Marsyangdi on the last day of the season, Police Club beat their opponents to the title on goal difference.

SAUDI ARABIA

Final shoot-out

Al Ahli beat Al Ittihad 4-2 on penalties, after extra time had left the two sides goalless, to claim the Saudi Cup of Champions Final.

Al Ahli will go into the group stage of next year's AFC Champions League, along with Saudi league champions Al Hilal, Al Ittihad – who were second in the league as well as the Cup of Champions – and third-place Ittifaq.

SOUTH KOREA

Kim's maiden trophy

Ulsan coach Kim Ho-gon won his first trophy as his side beat Busan I'Park 3-2 in the K-League Cup Final.

"This win will give us confidence to go and improve our league form," said Kim, whose side won with goals from Koh Chang-hyun, Seol Ki-hyeon and Kang Jin-wook.

ASIA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Quarter-finals draw

Al Ittihad (Sau) v Seoul (SKo)
Cerezo Osaka (Jap) v Jeonbuk Motors (SKo)
Sepahan (Irn) v Al Sadd (Qat)
Suwon Bluewings (SKo) v Zob Ahan (Irn)
1st legs - Sep 14; 2nd legs - Sep 27/28

AFC CUP

1st knockout round

Single leg ties

May 24: Arbil (Irq) 1 Tampines Rovers (Sin) 0 (aet); Duhok (Irq) 1 Dempo (Ind) 0; Muangthong United (Tha) 4 Al Ahed (Leb) 0; Nasaf (Uzb) 2 Al Faisaly (Jor) 1.
May 25: Al Qadsia (Kuw) 2 Kuwait SC (Kuw) 2 (aet, Kuwait SC 3-2 on pens); Al Wehdat (Jor) 2 Shurtan (Uzb) 1; Chonburi (Tha) 3 Sriwijaya (Ins) 0; Song Lam Nghe An (Vie) 1 Persipura Jayapura (Ins) 3.

Quarter-finals draw

Al Wehdat v Duhok
Chonburi v Nasaf
Kuwait SC v Muangthong United
Persipura Jayapura v Arbil
1st legs - Sep 13; 2nd legs - Sep 27

INDIA

INDIA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Salgaocar (C)	26	18	2	6	58	27	56
East Bengal	26	15	6	5	44	21	51
Dempo	26	15	5	6	63	34	50
Churchill Bros	26	14	8	4	57	31	50
Pune	26	9	9	8	32	27	36
Mohun Bagan	26	8	10	8	34	32	34
Mumbai	26	9	7	10	24	28	34
Chirag Utd	26	5	14	7	31	36	29
Indian Arrows	26	7	8	11	31	49	29
Viva Kerala	26	6	9	11	30	36	27
Air India	26	5	9	12	25	57	24
Hind'stan Aero	26	6	6	14	18	40	24
ONGC (R)	26	5	9	12	25	36	24
JCT (R)	26	6	6	14	17	35	24

JAPAN

June 25: Kashima 2 Kawasaki 2; Avispa 1 Jubilo 2; Nagoya 1 Urawa 1; Albirex 1 Cerezo 1; Ventforet 1 Kashiwa 4.
June 26: Gamba 5 Sanfrecce 3; Shimizu 1 Vegalta 0; Omiya 1 Vissel 1; Montedio 0 Yokohama 2.
July 2: Vegalta 1 Nagoya 1; Urawa 1 Gamba 1; Avispa 1 Ventforet 0; Shimizu 0 Kashima 0; Albirex 2 Montedio 0; Cerezo 5 Kashiwa 0.
July 3: Yokohama 2 Kawasaki 1; Omiya 0 Sanfrecce 1; Jubilo 3 Vissel 0.
July 6: Montedio 0 Urawa 0; Albirex 1 Ventforet 2.
July 9: Ventforet 1 Shimizu 2; Kawasaki 3 Avispa 2; Vissel 0 Nagoya 1; Kashiwa 1 Vegalta 0; Jubilo 1 Yokohama 2.
July 10: Kashima 1 Albirex 2; Sanfrecce 1 Cerezo 3; Omiya 2 Gamba 3.
July 13: Nagoya 2 Kashima 1; Kashiwa 3 Sanfrecce 1; Yokohama 2 Montedio 1; Cerezo 2 Jubilo 3; Avispa 1 Omiya 0; Urawa 2 Kawasaki 0; Gamba 3 Vissel 2; Vegalta 0 Shimizu 0.
July 16: Shimizu 2 Albirex 1; Ventforet 4 Gamba 3; Vissel 4 Cerezo 1; Kawasaki 3 Kashiwa 2.
July 17: Kashima 3 Vegalta 0; Omiya 1 Yokohama 1; Montedio 0 Nagoya 2; Jubilo 1 Urawa 1.
July 18: Sanfrecce 0 Avispa 0.

JAPAN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Yokohama	17	10	4	3	29	16	34
Kashiwa	17	11	1	5	32	21	34
Nagoya	16	8	6	2	27	17	30
Kawasaki	17	9	3	5	33	25	30
Gamba	15	9	2	4	36	31	29
Shimizu	17	7	6	4	22	21	27
Jubilo	17	7	5	5	28	18	26
Vegalta	17	6	8	3	19	15	26
Sanfrecce	17	7	5	5	22	22	26
Kashima	15	5	4	6	22	21	19
Vissel	17	5	4	8	17	20	19
Omiya	17	4	7	6	18	26	19
Cerezo	16	4	6	6	26	22	18
Urawa	17	3	9	5	19	19	18
Albirex	17	4	6	7	16	21	18
Ventforet	17	4	5	8	19	31	17
Montedio	17	2	3	12	11	28	9
Avispa	17	2	2	13	13	35	8

34-round season (17x2); bottom 3 will be relegated

OMAN

OMAN – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Suwaiq (C)	22	12	7	3	31	15	43
Al Oruba	22	12	4	6	31	14	40
Al Nahda	22	10	8	4	30	18	38
Dhofar	22	8	6	8	24	22	30
Oman	22	7	8	7	24	22	29
Al Shabab	22	8	4	10	25	29	28
Al Hilal	22	7	6	9	25	29	27
Al Taleea	22	6	8	8	27	27	26
Muscat	22	6	8	8	23	30	26
Saham	22	7	5	10	18	27	26
Al Ahli (R)	22	7	5	10	14	23	26
Al Nasr (R)	22	4	7	11	17	33	19

SAUDI ARABIA

SAUDI ARABIA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Hilal (C)	26	19	7	0	52	18	64
Al Ittihad	26	13	12	1	49	23	51
Al Ittifaq	26	15	3	8	45	30	48
Al Shabab	26	13	7	6	42	30	46
Al Nasr	26	11	10	5	44	34	43
Al Ahli	26	11	4	11	48	41	37
Al Taawun	26	9	8	9	37	31	35
Al Faysali	26	10	5	11	39	47	35
Al Fath	26	8	7	11	27	35	31
Al Ra'ed	26	7	9	10	31	40	30
Najran	26	8	2	16	33	52	26
Al Wehda	26	6	6	14	43	44	24
Al Qadisiyah (R)	26	4	11	11	31	39	23
Al Hazm (R)	26	1	3	22	13	70	6

SOUTH KOREA

Regular season

June 25: Jeju 2 Gwangju 1; Sangju 0 Jeonbuk 3; Busan 2 Ulsan 0; Daejeon 1 Suwon 3; Gyeongnam 2 Pohang 3; Daegu 2 Seongnam 1; Seoul 1 Incheon 1.
June 26: Chunnam 1 Gangwon 0.
July 2: Sangju 1 Daegu 2; Incheon 2 Gwangju 2; Daejeon 4 Chunnam 4; Gangwon 2 Jeju 4; Busan 1 Seongnam 0; Suwon 2 Pohang 1.
July 3: Jeonbuk 2 Seoul 2; Ulsan 0 Gyeongnam 0.
July 9: Gwangju 2 Gangwon 0; Jeju 2 Gyeongnam 3; Daegu 2 Busan 3; Pohang 7 D'jeon 0; Seoul 3 Sangju 2.
July 10: Seongnam 2 Incheon 2; Ulsan 0 Jeonbuk 0; Chunnam 3 Suwon 1.
July 16: Seongnam 2 Jeju 2; Gangwon 1 Ulsan 2; Gyeongnam 7 Daejeon 1; Sangju 1 Busan 2; Gwangju 1 Jeonbuk 1; Suwon 1 Incheon 0.
July 17: Chunnam 3 Daegu 1; Pohang 1 Seoul 2.

SOUTH KOREA – REGULAR

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Jeonbuk	18	11	4	3	39	20	37
Pohang	18	9	6	3	35	20	33
Chunnam	18	9	4	5	23	16	31
Jeju	18	8	5	5	30	25	29
Busan	18	8	5	5	30	26	29
Gyeongnam	18	8	3	7	28	25	27
Seoul	18	7	6	5	26	26	27
Suwon	18	8	2	8	26	23	26
Ulsan	18	7	4	7	17	19	25
Incheon	18	5	9	4	23	25	24
Gwangju	18	6	5	7	19	22	23
Daegu	18	6	5	7	24	29	23
Sangju	18	5	6	7	25	28	21
Seongnam	18	3	7	8	22	26	16
Daejeon	18	3	6	9	21	38	15
Gangwon	18	1	3	14	6	26	6

30-round regular season (15x2); top 6 will enter championship play-offs

OCEANIA

SOLOMON ISLANDS

Overall championship play-off

1st leg

June 13
Koloale 0
Solomon Warriors 0

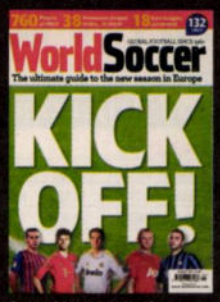
2nd leg

June 16
Solomon Warriors 2 (Billy 8, Ifunaoa 12)
Koloale 3 (Totori 37, Nawo 59, Fa'arodo 63)
HT: 2-1
Koloale 3-2 on agg
Sent off: Billy, Kwanae (both Warriors)

KEY TO LEAGUE TABLES
(C) = champions (R) = relegated

FORTHCOMING FIXTURES

August 1
Euro Under-19 Final
August 2 and 3
UEFA Champions League 3rd qualifying round, 2nd leg
August 4
Europa League 3rd qualifying round, 2nd leg
August 10
International friendlies
August 12 and 14
CAF Champions League group games
August 16 and 17
UEFA Champions League play-off round, 1st leg
August 18
Europa League play-off round, 1st leg
August 20
Under-20 World Cup Final
August 23 and 24
UEFA Champions League play-off round, 2nd leg
August 25
Europa League play-off round, 2nd leg
August 26
UEFA Super Cup
August 26, 27 and 28
CAF Champions League group games



August 2011 Vol 51 No 12

EDITOR Gavin Hamilton
ART EDITOR Gary Payne
ASSISTANT EDITOR Nich Hills
PICTURE EDITOR Duncan Bond
NEWS EDITOR Jamie Rainbow
EDITORIAL SECRETARY June Hiscock
PICTURES Pictures copyright: Press Association Images, Getty Images, Action Images and Reuters

Thanks this issue to Mike Hughes, Peter Neish, David Preston, Dave Rallis

EDITORIAL
Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London SE1 0SU
Tel: +44 (0) 20 3148 4817
Fax: +44 (0) 20 3148 8130
E-mail: world_soccer@ipcmedia.com

ADVERTISING AND SPONSORSHIP
Lee Hilton
Tel: +44 (0) 20 3148 2537
+44 (0) 20 3148 2823
E-mail: lee_hilton@ipcmedia.com

PRODUCTION MANAGER Tom Jennings
PUBLISHING DIRECTOR Hamish Dawson
MANAGING DIRECTOR Paul Williams

Advertising +44 (0) 20 3148 2537
+44 (0) 20 3148 2823
Back issues +44 (0) 20 3148 4816
Binders +44 (0) 20 3148 4816

International licensing enquiries
+44 (0) 20 314 85490
E-mail: bianca_hamilton-foster@ipcmedia.com

IPC INSPIRE

SUBSCRIPTIONS ORDER HOTLINE
+44 (0)845 676 7778
E-mail: ipcsubs@qss-uk.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS RATES
Annual sub is for 12 months (13 issues, prices include postage) UK: £48.10 Europe/Eire (inc. VAT): 78.95euros (airmail) USA: $99.45 (airmail) Rest of world: £83.15 (airmail)

Periodicals paid at Rahway, NJ Postmaster: send address changes to *World Soccer*, c/o MAIL America, 365 Blair Road, Avenel NJ 07001, USA. USPS004075

SUBSCRIPTIONS DEPARTMENT
Rockwood House, 9-17 Perrymount Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH16 3DH, England Tel: +44 (0) 1444 475 675

World Soccer is a member of ESM EUROPEAN SPORTS MEDIA

● A Bola (Portugal) ● De Telegraaf (Holland) ● Don Balon (Spain) ● ElfVoetbal (Holland) ● Fanatik (Turkey) ● Frankfurter Allgemeine (Germany) ● Kicker (Germany) ● Sport-Express (Russia) ● Sport/Foot (Belgium) ● TIPS Bladet (Denmark) ● World Soccer (UK)

● Titan Sport (China) ● KickOff (S Africa) Netease (China) ● SportalKorea (S Korea)

COPA AMERICA 2011

Argentina

GOALKEEPERS

12	Mariano ANDUJAR	30.07.83	Catania (Ita)
1	Juan Pablo CARRIZO	06.05.84	River Plate
23	Sergio ROMERO	02.02.87	AZ (Hol)

DEFENDERS

4	Nicolas BURDISSO	12.04.81	Roma (Ita)
2	Ezequiel GARAY	10.10.86	Real Madrid (Spa)
6	Gabriel MILITO	07.09.80	Barcelona (Spa)
13	Nicolas PAREJA	19.01.84	Spartak Moscow (Rus)
17	Marcos ROJO	20.03.90	Spartak Moscow (Rus)
3	Pablo ZABALETA	16.01.85	Manchester City (Eng)
8	Javier ZANETTI	10.08.73	Internazionale (Ita)

MIDFIELDERS

19	Ever BANEGA	29.06.88	Valencia (Spa)
15	Lucas BIGLIA	30.01.86	Anderlecht (Blg)
5	Esteban CAMBIASSO	18.08.80	Internazionale (Ita)
7	Angel DI MARIA	14.02.88	Real Madrid (Spa)
20	Fernando GAGO	10.04.86	Real Madrid (Spa)
14	Javier MASCHERANO	08.06.84	Barcelona (Spa)
18	Javier PASTORE	20.06.89	Palermo (Ita)

FORWARDS

16	Sergio AGUERO	02.06.88	Atletico Madrid (Spa)
9	Gonzalo HIGUAIN	10.12.87	Real Madrid (Spa)
21	Ezequiel LAVEZZI	03.05.85	Napoli (Ita)
10	Lionel MESSI	24.06.87	Barcelona (Spa)
22	Diego MILITO	12.06.79	Internazionale (Ita)
11	Carlos TEVEZ	05.02.84	Manchester City (Eng)

COACH

Sergio BATISTA	09.11.62	

Bolivia

GOALKEEPERS

1	Carlos ARIAS	27.04.82	Maccabi Netanya (Isr)
23	Sergio GALARZA	25.08.75	Blooming
12	Daniel VACA	03.11.78	The Strongest

DEFENDERS

4	Lorgio ALVAREZ	29.06.78	Bolivar
13	Santos AMADOR	06.04.82	Nacional Potosi
3	Luis GUTIERREZ	15.01.85	Oriente Petrolero
2	Miguel HOYOS	11.03.81	Oriente Petrolero
16	Ronald RALDES	20.04.81	Colon (Arg)
5	Ronald RIVERO	29.01.80	Bolivar
14	Christian VARGAS	08.09.83	San Jose

MIDFIELDERS

21	Jhasmani CAMPOS	10.05.88	Oriente Petrolero
22	Rudy CARDOZO	14.02.90	Bolivar
19	Jose Luis CHAVEZ	18.05.86	Blooming
6	Walter FLORES	29.10.78	Bolivar
8	Ronald GARCIA	17.12.80	Bolivar
15	Jaime ROBLES	02.02.78	Aurora
7	Edivaldo ROJAS	17.11.85	Naval (Por)
20	Mauricio SAUCEDO	14.08.85	Oriente Petrolero
10	Joselito VACA	12.08.82	Oriente Petrolero

FORWARDS

17	Juan Carlos ARCE	10.04.85	Oriente Petrolero
9	Marcelo MARTINS	18.06.87	Shakhtar D (Ukr)
18	Ricardo PEDRIEL	19.01.87	Sivasspor (Tur)
11	Alcides PENA	14.01.89	Oriente Petrolero

COACH

Gustavo QUINTEROS (Arg)	15.02.65	

Brazil

GOALKEEPERS

22	JEFFERSON	30.01.83	Botafogo
1	JULIO CESAR	03.09.79	Internazionale (Ita)
12	VICTOR	21.01.83	Gremio

DEFENDERS

21	ADRIANO Correia	26.10.84	Barcelona (Spa)
6	ANDRE SANTOS	08.03.83	Fenerbahce (Tur)
2	DANI ALVES	06.05.83	Barcelona (Spa)
3	LUCIO	08.05.78	Internazionale (Ita)
14	LUISAO	13.02.81	Benfica (Por)
23	David LUIZ	22.04.87	Chelsea (Eng)
13	MAICON	26.07.81	Internazionale (Ita)
4	THIAGO SILVA	22.09.84	Milan (Ita)

MIDFIELDERS

16	ELANO	14.06.81	Santos
17	ELIAS	16.05.85	Atletico Madrid (Spa)
10	GANSO	12.10.89	Santos
5	LUCAS Leiva	09.01.87	Liverpool (Eng)
18	LUCAS Silva	13.08.92	Sao Paulo
8	RAMIRES	24.03.87	Chelsea (Eng)
15	SANDRO	15.03.89	Tottenham H (Eng)

FORWARDS

19	FRED	03.10.83	Fluminense
20	JADSON	22.10.83	Shakhtar D (Ukr)
11	NEYMAR	05.02.92	Santos
9	Alexandre PATO	02.09.89	Milan (Ita)
7	ROBINHO	25.02.84	Milan (Ita)

COACH

Mano MENEZES	11.06.62	

Chile

GOALKEEPERS

1	Claudio BRAVO	13.04.83	Real Sociedad (Spa)
23	Paulo GARCES	02.08.84	Universidad Catolica
12	Miguel PINTO	04.07.83	Atlas (Mex)

DEFENDERS

5	Pablo CONTRERAS	11.09.78	PAOK (Greece)
4	Mauricio ISLA	12.06.88	Udinese (Ita)
18	Gonzalo JARA	29.08.85	WBA (Eng)
3	Waldo PONCE	04.12.82	Cruz Azul (Mex)
8	Arturo VIDAL	22.05.87	Leverkusen (Ger)

MIDFIELDERS

15	Jean BEAUSEJOUR	01.06.84	Birmingham C (Eng)
6	Carlos CARMONA	21.02.87	Atalanta (Ita)
13	Marco ESTRADA	28.05.83	Montpellier (Fra)
14	Matias FERNANDEZ	15.05.86	Sporting Lisbon (Por)
16	Gonzalo FIERRO	21.03.83	Flamengo
21	Felipe GUTIERREZ	08.10.90	Universidad Catolica
11	Luis JIMENEZ	17.06.84	Cesena (Ita)
17	Gary MEDEL	03.08.87	Sevilla (Spa)
20	Rodrigo MILLAR	03.11.81	Colo-Colo
2	Francisco SILVA	11.02.86	Universidad Catolica
10	Jorge VALDIVIA	19.10.83	Palmeiras (Bra)

FORWARDS

19	Carlos MUNOZ	21.04.89	Santiago Wanderers
22	Esteban PAREDES	01.08.80	Colo-Colo
7	Alexis SANCHEZ	19.12.88	Udinese (Ita)
9	Humberto SUAZO	10.05.81	Monterrey (Mex)

COACH

Claudio BORGHI (Arg)	26.09.64	

Colombia

GOALKEEPERS

23	Breiner CASTILLO	05.05.78	Ind Medellin
12	Luis MARTINEZ	11.07.82	Once Caldas
1	Nelson RAMOS	23.11.81	Millonarios

DEFENDERS

5	Yulian ANCHICO	28.05.84	Pachuca (Mex)
7	Pablo ARMERO	02.11.86	Udinese (Ita)
22	Aquivaldo MOSQUERA	22.06.81	America (Mex)
14	Luis Amaranto PEREA	30.01.79	Atletico Madrid (Spa)
15	Juan David VALENCIA	15.01.86	Junior
3	Mario YEPES	13.01.76	Milan (Ita)
2	Cristian ZAPATA	30.09.86	Udinese (Ita)
18	Juan ZUNIGA	14.12.85	Napoli (Ita)

MIDFIELDERS

8	Abel AGUILAR	06.01.85	Hercules (Spa)
4	Gustavo BOLIVAR	16.04.85	Deportes Tolima
10	Juan Guillermo CUADRADO	26.05.88	Udinese (Ita)
13	Fredy GUARIN	30.06.86	Porto (Por)
6	Carlos SANCHEZ	06.02.86	Valenciennes (Fra)
16	Elkin SOTO	04.08.80	Mainz (Ger)

FORWARDS

9	Radamel FALCAO	10.02.86	Porto (Por)
19	Teofilo GUTIERREZ	27.05.85	Racing Club (Arg)
21	Jackson MARTINEZ	03.10.86	Jaguares (Mex)
17	Dayro MORENO	16.09.85	Once Caldas
20	Adrian RAMOS	22.01.86	Hertha Berlin (Ger)
11	Hugo RODALLEGA	25.07.85	Wigan Athletic (Eng)

COACH

Hernan Dario GOMEZ	03.02.56	

Costa Rica

GOALKEEPERS

1	Mainor ALVAREZ	14.11.89	Saprissa
13	Danny CARVAJAL	12.04.90	San Carlos
18	Leonel MOREIRA	02.04.90	Herediano

DEFENDERS

3	Jhonny ACOSTA	21.07.83	Alajuelense
2	Francisco CALVO	08.07.92	San Jacinto Col (USA)
19	Oscar DUARTE	03.06.89	Saprissa
16	Kevin FAJARDO	05.09.89	Santos de Guapilesww
15	Jorge GATGENS	23.07.88	Perez Zeledon
20	Pedro LEAL	31.01.89	Puntarenas
4	Jose SALVATIERRA	10.10.89	Alajuelense

MIDFIELDERS

14	Hanzel ARAUZ	09.08.89	Barrio Mexico
22	Jose CUBERO	14.02.87	Herediano
7	Allen GUEVARA	16.04.89	Alajuelense
8	David GUZMAN	18.02.90	Saprissa
6	Heiner MORA	20.06.84	Saprissa
5	Luis VALLE	11.05.89	Alajuelense

FORWARDS

10	Randall BRENES	12.08.83	Cartagines
12	Joel CAMPBELL	10.02.92	Saprissa
9	Jorge CASTRO	11.09.90	Uni de Costa Rica
21	Cesar ELIZONDO	10.02.88	Saprissa
11	Diego MADRIGAL	19.03.89	Cerro Porteno (Par)
17	Josue MARTINEZ	25.03.90	Saprissa

COACH

Ricardo LA VOLPE (Arg)	06.02.52	

Ecuador

GOALKEEPERS

12	Maximo BANGUERA	16.12.85	Barcelona
22	Alexander DOMINGUEZ	05.06.87	LDU Quito
1	Marcelo ELIZAGA	19.04.72	Deportivo Quito

DEFENDERS

21	Gabriel ACHILIER	24.03.85	Emelec
19	Norberto ARAUJO	13.10.78	LDU Quito
10	Walter AYOVI	11.08.79	Monterrey (Mex)
2	Geovanny CAICEDO	28.03.81	LDU Quito
20	Diego CALDERON	26.10.86	LDU Quito
4	Luis CHECA	21.12.83	Deportivo Quito
3	Frickson ERAZO	05.05.88	El Nacional
13	Neicer REASCO	23.07.77	LDU Quito

MIDFIELDERS

7	Michael ARROYO	23.04.87	San Luis (Mex)
14	Segundo CASTILLO	15.05.82	Deportivo Quito
8	Edison MENDEZ	16.03.79	Emelec
5	Oswaldo MINDA	26.07.83	Deportivo Quito
18	Geovanny NAZARENO	17.01.88	Barcelona
6	Christian NOBOA	09.04.85	Rubin Kazan (Rus)
15	David QUIROZ	08.09.82	Emelec
16	Antonio VALENCIA	04.08.85	Man United (Eng)

FORWARDS

11	Christian BENITEZ	01.05.86	America (Mex)
9	Felipe CAICEDO	05.09.88	Levante (Spa)
23	Narciso MINA	25.11.82	Ind Jose Teran
17	Edson MONTANO	15.03.91	Gent (Blg)

COACH

Reinaldo RUEDA (Col)	16.04.57	

Mexico

GOALKEEPERS

1	Luis Ernesto MICHEL	21.07.79	Guadalajara
13	Carlos Felipe RODRIGUEZ	03.04.89	Morelia
12	Liborio SANCHEZ	09.10.89	Queretaro

DEFENDERS

22	Paul AGUILAR	06.03.86	America
3	Oswaldo ALANIS	18.03.89	Tecos
2	Kristian ALVAREZ	20.04.92	Guadalajara
14	Nestor ARAUJO	29.08.91	Cruz Azul
5	Darvin CHAVEZ	21.11.89	Monterrey
21	Hiram MIER	25.08.89	Monterrey
16	Miguel Angel PONCE	12.04.89	Guadalajara
23	Diego REYES	19.09.92	America
19	Hector REYNOSO	03.10.80	Guadalajara

MIDFIELDERS

11	Javier AQUINO	11.02.90	Cruz Azul
4	Diego DE BUEN	13.07.91	Pumas
15	Jorge ENRIQUEZ	08.01.91	Guadalajara
6	Antonio GALLARDO	19.04.89	Guadalajara
8	Emilio ORRANTIA	01.02.91	Pumas
17	Edgar PACHECO	22.01.90	Tigres

FORWARDS

7	Ulises DAVILA	23.06.91	Guadalajara
10	Giovani DOS SANTOS	11.05.89	Tottenham H (Eng)
9	Rafael MARQUEZ LUGO	02.11.81	Morelia
18	Oribe PERALTA	12.01.84	Santos Laguna
20	Alan PULIDO	08.03.91	Tigres

COACH

Luis Fernando TENA	20.01.58	

Paraguay

GOALKEEPERS		
12 Diego BARRETO	16.07.81	Cerro Porteno
22 Roberto FERNANDEZ	29.03.88	Racing Club (Arg)
1 Justo VILLAR	30.06.77	Valladolid (Spa)

DEFENDERS		
5 Antolin ALCARAZ	30.07.82	Wigan Athletic (Eng)
6 Marcos CACERES	05.05.86	Racing Club (Arg)
14 Paulo DA SILVA	01.02.80	Real Zaragoza (Spa)
4 Elvis MARECOS	15.02.80	Guarani
3 Ivan PIRIS	10.03.89	Cerro Porteno
17 Aureliano TORRES	16.06.82	San Lorenzo (Arg)
2 Dario VERON	26.07.79	Pumas (Mex)

MIDFIELDERS		
8 Edgar BARRETO	15.07.84	Atalanta (Ita)
15 Victor CACERES	25.03.85	Libertad
21 Marcelo ESTIGARRIBIA	21.09.87	Newell's OB (Arg)
20 Nestor ORTIGOZA	07.10.84	San Lorenzo (Arg)
23 Hernan PEREZ	25.02.89	Villarreal (Spa)
16 Cristian RIVEROS	16.10.82	Sunderland (Eng)
11 Jonathan SANTANA	19.10.81	Kayserispor (Tur)
13 Enrique VERA	10.03.79	LDU Quito (Ecu)

FORWARDS		
19 Lucas BARRIOS	13.11.84	B Dortmund (Ger)
18 Nelson HAEDO VALDEZ	28.11.83	Hercules (Spa)
10 Osvaldo MARTINEZ	08.04.86	Atlante (Mex)
9 Roque SANTA CRUZ	16.08.81	Man City (Eng)
7 Pablo ZEBALLOS	04.03.86	Olimpia

COACH		
Gerardo MARTINO (Arg)	20.11.62	

Peru

GOALKEEPERS		
23 Leao BUTRON	06.03.77	Uni San Martin
1 Raul FERNANDEZ	06.10.85	Nice (Fra)
12 Salomon LIBMAN	25.02.84	Alianza Lima

DEFENDERS		
3 Santiago ACASIETE	22.10.77	Almeria (Spa)
17 Giancarlo CARMONA	08.10.85	San Lorenzo (Arg)
15 Aldo CORZO	20.05.89	Uni San Martin
21 Christian RAMOS	04.11.88	Alianza Lima
13 Renzo REVOREDO	11.05.86	Uni de Deportes
2 Alberto RODRIGUEZ	31.10.84	Sporting Lisbon (Por)
4 Walter VILCHEZ	20.02.82	Sporting Cristal
19 Yoshimar YOTUN	07.05.90	Sporting Cristal

MIDFIELDERS		
5 Adan BALBIN	13.10.86	Uni San Martin
7 Josepmir BALLON	21.03.88	River Plate (Arg)
10 Rinaldo CRUZADO	21.09.84	Juan Aurich
22 Antonio GONZALES	16.06.86	Uni de Deportes
8 Michael GUEVARA	10.06.84	Sport Boys
11 Carlos LOBATON	06.02.80	Sporting Cristal

FORWARDS		
16 Luis ADVINCULA	02.03.90	Sporting Cristal
20 Andre CARRILLO	14.06.91	Sporting Lisbon (Por)
18 William CHIROQUE	10.03.80	Juan Aurich
9 Paolo GUERRERO	01.01.84	Hamburg (Ger)
14 Raul RUIDIAZ	25.07.90	Uni de Deportes
6 Juan VARGAS	15.10.83	Fiorentina (Ita)

COACH		
Sergio MARKARIAN (Uru)	01.11.44	

Uruguay

GOALKEEPERS		
12 Juan CASTILLO	17.04.78	Colo-Colo (Chl)
1 Fernando MUSLERA	16.06.86	Lazio (Ita)
23 Martin SILVA	25.03.83	Defensor Sporting

DEFENDERS		
22 Martin CACERES	07.04.87	Sevilla (Spa)
4 Sebastian COATES	07.10.90	Nacional
3 Diego GODIN	16.02.86	Atletico Madrid (Spa)
2 Diego LUGANO	02.11.80	Fenerbahce (Tur)
11 Alvaro PEREIRA	28.01.85	Porto (Por)
16 Maxi PEREIRA	08.06.84	Benfica (Por)
19 Andres SCOTTI	14.12.75	Colo-Colo (Chl)
6 Mauricio VICTORINO	11.10.82	Cruzeiro (Bra)

MIDFIELDERS		
17 Egidio AREVALO	27.09.82	Botafogo (Bra)
8 Sebastian EGUREN	08.01.81	Sporting Gijon
5 Walter GARGANO	27.07.84	Napoli (Ita)
20 Alvaro GONZALEZ	29.10.84	Lazio (Ita)
14 Nicolas LODEIRO	21.03.89	Ajax (Hol)
15 Diego PEREZ	18.05.80	Bologna (Ita)
7 Cristian RODRIGUEZ	30.09.85	Porto (Por)

FORWARDS		
13 Sebastian ABREU	17.10.76	Botafogo (Bra)
21 Edinson CAVANI	14.02.87	Napoli (Ita)
10 Diego FORLAN	19.05.79	Atletico Madrid (Spa)
18 Abel HERNANDEZ	08.08.90	Palermo (Ita)
9 Luis SUAREZ	24.01.87	Liverpool (Eng)

COACH		
Oscar TABAREZ	03.03.47	

Venezuela

GOALKEEPERS		
22 Dani HERNANDEZ	29.10.85	Real Murcia (Spa)
12 Jose MORALES	07.07.78	Deportivo Anzoategui
1 Renny VEGA	04.07.79	Caracas

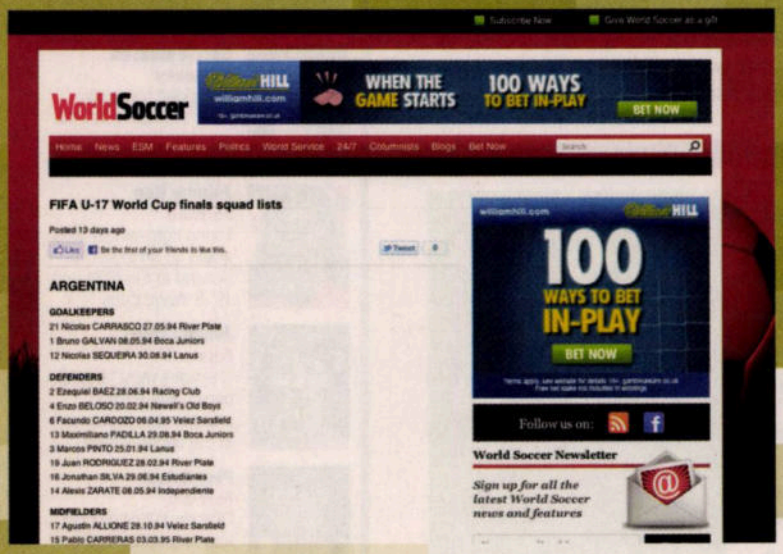
DEFENDERS		
6 Gabriel CICHERO	25.04.84	Newell's OB (Arg)
21 Alexander GONZALEZ	13.09.92	Caracas
2 Jose Luis GRANADOS	22.10.86	Real Esppor
20 Grenddy PEROZO	25.05.85	Boyaca Chico (Col)
3 Jose Manuel REY	20.05.75	Mineros de Guayana
16 Roberto ROSALES	20.11.88	Twente (Hol)
4 Oswaldo VIZCARRONDO	31.05.84	Deportivo Anzoategui

MIDFIELDERS		
18 Juan ARANGO	16.05.80	B M'gladbach (Ger)
5 Giacomo DI GIORGI	24.02.81	Deportivo Anzoategui
11 Cesar GONZALEZ	10.01.82	Gimnasia de LP (Arg)
14 Franklin LUCENA	20.02.81	Caracas
19 Jesus MEZA	06.01.86	Atlas (Mex)
10 Yohandry OROZCO	19.03.91	Wolfsburg (Ger)
8 Tomas RINCON	13.01.88	Hamburg (Ger)
13 Luis Manuel SEIJAS	23.06.86	Santa Fe

FORWARDS		
17 Daniel ARISMENDI	04.07.82	Deportivo Anzoategui
7 Nicolas FEDOR	19.08.85	Getafe (Spa)
9 Giancarlo MALDONADO	29.06.82	Atlante (Mex)
15 Alejandro MORENO	09.07.79	Chivas USA (USA)
23 Jose Salomon RONDON	16.09.89	Malaga (Spa)

COACH		
Cesar FARIAS	07.03.73	

www.worldsoccer.com



New look!
New features!
New writers!

The best football writing from around the world

THE GREAT TEAMS

Ajax 1973

The Dutch side, famed for their "Total Football", became the first club since Real Madrid to win a hat-trick of European titles

Final line-up...Ajax before the start of the 1973 European Cup Final against Juventus

The 1-0 scoreline by which Ajax beat Juventus in Belgrade in the 1973 Final did not do justice to the manner in which they won their third consecutive European Cup. Such was Ajax's dominance, the result was never in doubt from the moment Johnny Rep scored in the third minute.

The Ajax team was essentially the same that had beaten Panathinaikos in 1971 and Internazionale in 1972, with Rep coming in for veteran winger Sjaak Swart and Horst Blankenburg taking over from Velibor Vasovic as sweeper.

Rinus Michels, the coach widely seen as the father of "Total Football", had left for Barcelona in the summer of 1971, but the team he left behind went on to bigger and better things. While Michels had been a hard taskmaster, his surprise replacement Stefan Kovacs was more placatory and willing to give the players greater freedom.

For two seasons, it worked brilliantly, with talented players attacking safe in the knowledge that their team-mates would be there to cover.

Kovacs' freedom, however, also paved the way for the team's destruction as he failed to keep a lid on the indiscipline that started to creep in. He left after the Belgrade triumph, joining the French federation. Johan Cruyff re-joined Michels at Barcelona in August 1973 for a then world record £920,000 and the team disintegrated soon afterwards. **WS**

THE COACH AND HIS TEAM

Stefan Kovacs
The Romanian took over from Rinus Michels in the summer of 1971, arriving from Steaua Bucharest. He was not a well-known figure in Holland and was criticised for being too conciliatory to the players. Went on to manage the France national team before spells back in Romania and with Panathinaikos and Monaco.

The formation
Under Kovacs, Ajax continued to adhere to Michels' "Total Football", with heavy pressing and lots of interchanging of positions. While in theory any player could swap places with any other, in practice the changes were made mostly down the flanks and through the middle.

Ajax played in three lines of three, with Blankenburg sweeping. Rep, Haan and Suurbier swapped places on the right, as did Keizer, Muhren and Krol on the left and Cruyff, Neeskens and Hulshoff through the middle.

THE FIRST XI

Heinz Stuy
Goalkeeper
Won plenty of trophies with Ajax but never played for Holland. Was criticised for blunders.

Wim Suurbier
Defender
Right-back who loved to attack, changing places with team-mates Haan and Rep.

Horst Blankenburg
Defender
Sweeper who never got to play for West Germany due to the dominance of Franz Beckenbauer.

Barry Hulshoff
Defender
Centre-back who spent nearly all of his career at Ajax. Won 14 caps for Holland.

Ruud Krol
Defender
Left-back who was also crucial for the national team. Missed the 1971 Final with a broken leg.

Arie Haan
Midfielder
Played on the right, linking well with Rep and Suurbier out wide and Neeskens in the centre.

Johan Neeskens
Midfielder
Former right-back turned playmaker who was the team's most important creative influence.

Gerrie Muhren
Midfielder
Left-sided midfielder, older brother of Arnold, who also played for Ajax and Holland.

Johnny Rep
Forward
Young right-winger who would go on to star for Holland at the 1974 and 1978 World Cups.

Johan Cruyff
Forward
The side's most forceful personality, a gifted attacker who excelled at the unpredictable.

Piet Keizer
Forward
Outside-left who could also play on the right and linked brilliantly with Cruyff.

NEXT MONTH SEPTEMBER ISSUE ON SALE AUG 26

CLASSIC FOOTBALL SHIRTS.CO.UK

Get kitted out for the new season

1000s of iconic shirts, shorts, socks, jackets and training items in stock

The biggest range of original football shirts anywhere in the world

Player categories, rare named & numbered shirts and 100s of brand new items with original tags

PLUS: 100s of AC Milan Player Issue items direct from the Serie A Champions' kit room

classicfootballshirts.co.uk

facebook.com/classicfootballshirts

twitter.com/classicshirts

PRO-DIRECT
soccer : the professional's choice

The World's Largest Online Football Store

adidas and Pro-Direct
Soccer UK EXCLUSIVE

PREDATOR
SL

£209.99
adidas adipower predator SL
Firm Ground - 34154

www.prodirectsoccer.com
The Professional's Choice...Direct to your Door